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Season 4: Issue 11 Monday 28th April 2008

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GOLD RUSH!

KNIGHTS PREVAIL IN BALLARAT

Photo by Steve Starek

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WHO'S IN, WHO'S OUT?

HYUNDAI A-LEAGUE SHAPES UP FOR 2008/09 SEASON

While most Hyundai A-League players have been on holidays during April, there has been plenty of movement amongst the eight clubs as they all look to revamp their squads for the Hyundai A-League 2008/09 season.

Adelaide United and Melbourne Victory have had to delay their off-season break due to their participation in the AFC Champions League, but that has not stopped them adjusting their player rosters accordingly. Adelaide United have re-signed Nathan Burns (2 years), Lucas Pantelis (2 years), Michael Valkanis (1 year), Angelo Costanzo (1 year) and Daniel Beltrame (1 year) as well as adding Sasa Ognenovski from Queensland Roar (2 years) and Daniel Mullen from the AIS (1 year), with Bobby Petta, Dez Giraldi, Shaun Ontong, Robert Bajic and Milan Susak released by the club.

Melbourne Victory bolstered their squad for the AFC Champions League with the re-signing of Daniel Vasilevski (2 years), Steven Pace (2 years) and Nick Ward (1 year) as well as adding Billy Celeski (Perth Glory – 1 year) and Tom Pondeljak (Central Coast Mariners – 2 years), with youngster Nathan Elasi and goalkeeper Steve Mautone on board as a short-term signings to provide cover during Asia's premier club competition. The Victory released Adrian Caceres and Ljubo Milicevic.

Hyundai A-League 2008 Grand Finalists, the **Central Coast Mariners**, have had to rebuild following the departure of John Aloisi (end of contract), Tom Pondeljak (Melbourne Victory), Alvin Ceccoli (released) and the retirement of Tony Vidmar. Coach Lawrie McKinna has rewarded loyalty and performance by offering revised contracts to Nigel Boogaard (2 years), John Hutchinson (2 years), Mile Jedinak (2 years), Brad Porter (2 years), Matt Simon (2 years) and has also added Adrian Caceres from Melbourne Victory (2 years), Ahmad Elrich (Wellington Phoenix – 2 years) and former Australian Youth international Dylan Macallister from Norwegian club FC Lyn Norway (2 years).

Hyundai A-League 2008 Champions, the **Newcastle Jets**, will see a very different squad at pre-season training compared with the one that held the Championship trophy aloft at the Sydney Football Stadium in February. Gary Van Egmond has shown faith in his younger players and re-signed Tarek Elrich (2 years), Adam D'Apuzzo (2 years) and goalkeeper Ben Kennedy (2 years), whilst recently adding former Adelaide United Shaun Ontong (2 years) and young AIS striker Jason Naidovski (2 years). Leaving EnergyAustralia Stadium are Andrew Durante (Wellington Phoenix), Mark Bridge (Sydney FC), Denni (released), Jorge Drovandi (released), Steve Eagleton (retired), Troy Hearfield (Wellington Phoenix), Mario Jardel (released), Paul Kohler (released), Stuart Musialik (Sydney FC), Scott Tunbridge (released). With plenty of room left in the roster, Van Egmond is about to embark on a European scouting trip to eye potential signings. On his return to Australia, he will detour via Japan to assess the form of his star striker Joel Griffiths who is currently on loan at Avispa Fukuoka in the J-League Division 2.

David Mitchell begins his first full season as the Head Coach of **Perth Glory** and has the opportunity to construct a squad of his own. Jamie Harnwell (2 years), Jamie Coyne (2 years), James Robinson (1 year), David Tarka (1 year), Jimmy Downey (2 years)and Naum Sekulovski (1 year) have been re-signed and local Western Australian Josip Magdic and Ivorian Eugene Dadi have also been added to the club. The departure of Simon Colosimo (Sydney FC), Leo Bertos (Wellington Phoenix), Billy Celeski (Melbourne Victory) and Stan Lazaridis (released) will still leave Mitchell with a number of positions to full before the season starts.

Queensland Roar coach Frank Farina has travelled to Brazil during the off-season to visit Atletico Mineiro on a fact finding mission and will also be looking to add some new names to his team sheet after losing Sasa Ognenovski (Adelaide United), Reinaldo (Busan I'Park, Korea Republic), Simon Lynch (released) and Marcinho (released). Local favourites Josh McLoughan and Griffin McMaster have both been rewarded with 2 year contracts each. Young Queenslanders Tim Smits (Rochedale Rovers - QLD, 2 years) and David Dodd (Palm Beach - QLD, 2 years) along with AIS pair of Luke Devere and Isaka Cernak the have also recently joined the club for pre-season training. Adam – there's also a young guy mentioned in today's GC Bulletin

Sydney FC has signed Qantas Socceroo John Aloisi (2 years) as the club's new marquee player along with Simon Colosimo (Perth Glory – 2 years), Stuart Musialik (Newcastle Jets – 2 years) and Mark Bridge (Newcastle Jets – 3 years). Leaving Sydney are former club captain Mark Rudan (Avispa Fukuoka, Japan), Ufuk Talay (Avispa Fukuoka, Japan), David Zdrilic (released), Ruben Zadkovich (Derby County, England), Patrick (released) and Ben Vidaic (released), whilst Adam Biddle (to Blacktown City, NSW), Ivan Necevski (to Blacktown City, NSW), Nick Tsattlios (to Penrith Nepean, NSW) are all keeping sharp with a stint in the NSW Premier League.

After their inaugural season in the Hyundai A-League competition, the **Wellington Phoenix** has resigned Vince Lia (2 years) and added New Zealand International and Wellington local Leo Bertos from Perth Glory (2 years) and fellow Kiwi Ben Sigmund (Auckland City, NZ - 1 year) . Australians' Andrew Durante (2 years - Newcastle Jets), Troy Hearfield (2 years - Newcastle Jets) and Jon McKain (2 years - from Politechnica Timisoara, Romania*) as well as Chinese import Lei lei Gao (MyPa, Finland) have also taken up new contracts in the New Zealand capital. Leaving the Phoenix are the foundation captain Ross Aloisi (retired), Steven O'Dor (released), Cleberson (released), George Paladini (released), Ahmad Elrich (Central Coast Mariners), Felipe (released), Kristian Rees (short-term player, released), Jacob Spoonley (released) and Steven Old (Macarthur Rams, NSW Premier League).

With still around three and half months to the kick-off of the Hyundai A-League 2008-09 season, Football Federation Australia will provide further updates at the end of May and June and again at the start of the season in August.

Words by Adam Mark

Photo by Therese Duffy

ADELAIDE UNITED

Re-signed – Nathan Burns (2 years), Lucas Pantelis (2 years), Michael Valkanis (1 year), Angelo Costanzo (1 year), Daniel Beltrame (1 year)

In – Daniel Mullen (1 year), Sasa Ognenovski (Queensland Roar)

Out – Bobby Petta (released at completion of contract), Dez Giraldi (released - after AFC Champions League), Shaun Ontong (Newcastle Jets), Robert Bajic (released), Milan Susak (released)

CENTRAL COAST MARINERS

Re-signed – Nigel Boogaard (2 years), John Hutchinson (2 years), Mile Jedinak (2 years), Brad Porter (2 years), Matt Simon (2 years)

In – Adrian Caceres (Melbourne Victory - after AFC Champions League), Ahmad Elrich (Wellington Phoenix), Dylan Macallister (FC Lyn, Norway)

Out–John Aloisi (end of contract), Tom Pondeljak (Melbourne Victory), Tony Vidmar (retired)

MELBOURNE VICTORY

Re-signed - Daniel Vasilevski (2 years), Stephen Pace (2 years), Nick Ward (1 year)

In – Nathan Elasi (6 months – AFC Champions League only), Billy Celeski (Perth Glory), Tom Pondeljak (Central Coast Mariners)

Out – Adrian Caceres (Central Coast Mariners – after AFC Champions League), Ljubo Milicevic (released)

NEWCASTLE JETS

Re-signed - Tarek Elrich (2 years), Adam D'Apuzzo (2 years), Ben Kennedy (2 years)

In – Jason Naidovski (AIS), Shaun Ontong (Adelaide United)

Out – Andrew Durante (Wellington Phoenix), Mark Bridge (Sydney FC), Denni (released), Jorge Drovandi (released), Steve Eagleton (retired), Troy Hearfield (Wellington Phoenix), Mario Jardel (released), Paul Kohler (released), Stuart Musialik (Sydney FC), Scott Tunbridge (released).

On-Loan - Joel Griffiths (to Avispa Fukuoka, Japan)

PERTH GLORY

Re-signed – Jamie Harnwell (2 years), Jamie Coyne (2 years), James Robinson (1 year), David Tarka (1 year), Jimmy Downey (2 years), Naum Sekulovski (1 year),

In – Eugene Dadi (1 year, Hapoel Acre, Israel), Josip Magdic (Floreat Athena, WA)

Out – Simon Colosimo (Sydney FC), Leo Bertos (Wellington Phoenix), Billy Celeski (Melbourne Victory), Stan Lazaridis (released)

On-Loan - Jamie Harnwell (to FC Vaduz, Switzerland/Liechtenstein)

QUEENSLAND ROAR

Re-signed - Josh McCloughan (2 years), Griffin McMaster (2 years)

In – Tim Smits (Rochedale Rovers - QLD, 2 years), David Dodd (Palm Beach - QLD, 2 years) plus the young Queenslander in the GC Bulletin

Out – Sasa Ognenovski (Adelaide United), Reinaldo (Busan I'Park, Korea Republic), Simon Lynch (released), Marcinho (released)

SYDNEY FC

In – Simon Colosimo (Perth Glory), John Aloisi (Central Coast Mariners), Mark Bridge (Newcastle Jets), Stuart Musialik (Newcastle Jets)

Out – Mark Rudan (Avispa Fukuoka, Japan), Ufuk Talay (Avispa Fukuoka, Japan), David Zdrilic (released), Ruben Zadkovich (Derby County, England), Patrick (released), Ben Vidaic (released)

On-Loan - Adam Biddle (to Blacktown City, NSW), Ivan Necevski (to Blacktown City, NSW), Nick Tsattlios (to Penrith-Nepean, NSW)

WELLINGTON PHOENIX

Re-signed – Vince Lia (2 years)

In – Leo Bertos (2 years - Perth Glory), Andrew Durante (2 years - Newcastle Jets), Jon McKain (2 years - from Politechnica Timisoara, Romania), Leilei Gao (MyPa, Finland), Troy Hearfield (2 years - Newcastle Jets), Ben Sigmund (1 year - Auckland City, NZ)

Out – Ross Aloisi (retired), Steven O'Dor (released), Cleberson (released), George Paladini (released), Ahmad Elrich (Central Coast Mariners), Felipe (released), Kristian Rees (short-term player, released), Jacob Spoonley (released), Steven Old (Macarthur Rams, NSW Premier League)

On-Loan – Costa Barbarouses (to Macarthur Rams, NSW), Greg Draper (to Whittlesea Zebras, Victoria)

Staying put: Stevn Pace has signed for another two years at Victory.

On the move: Mark Bridge returns to his home town after switching from the Jets to Sydney FC.

CHINESE FORTUNE !

Behind the scenes at Aussie WCQ in Kumming, China

Ne Hao!, or 'hello' in Mandarin…. the first words that greeted a few of the travelling Australian supporters on the tarmac at Kunming airport, most of whom had travelled thriteen hours from Australia to south-west China to experience the Socceroos in their first world cup qualifier abroad in the Asian Football Confederation zone.

And what an experience it was, even before a ball was kicked or a penalty saved! Travelling with the Fanatics, the tour organiser picked up our premium AUS $80 tickets from the Chinese football authorities the day before the match only to discover that the majority of Australian supporters would be sitting another 1000 metres above altitude, high in the second tier of Kunming's Tuodong Stadium!

To put the price of the match ticket in context, it equated one nights accommodation at a four star hotel where the Socceroos were based in Kunming, or could easily feed twenty people (yes 20) over indulging at a local restaurant with drinks! Something wasn't right and after relaying our disappointment with the ticket allocation, officials promised to rectify the situation and miracles happened within the space of minutes. Suddenly, our tickets were re-issued and we were now sitting on the half way line on the ground tier with a great view of the pitch.

We all know how the game unfolded and reflecting upon the result three weeks later, a draw was a wonderful and well deserved result for Australia. Losing all our forwards in the lead-up to such an important match, and then seeing Archie Thompson succumb to injury after ten minutes and the 200 Australian supporters inside the Stadium wondered where any attack would appear from.

The Chinese crowd was very loud and the atmosphere fantastic, even better than our last Asian Cup group game against Thailand in Bangkok last year. 'Ne hao' was pretty much only one of three words I picked up Mandarin and it was by far used every moment at the stadium. Chinese supporters decked in red t-shirts and draped in their People's Republic flags constantly approached Australian supporters waving, saying Ne hao and wanting the odd photo or two. Despite 40,000 people unanimously chanting to their team to 'dig deeper' in Mandarin and find a winner, the Chinese supporters never showed any animosity during and after the game.

In fact, the Fanatic's tour leader was approached by two of China's head supporters and presented with a book before the game, which they both signed. The author was the patriotically-named Mayday Zhang (Chinese name Zhang Wuyi, with the Wuyi being the Chinese characters for May 1) and the other was an equally-proud gentleman with a rather extravagant cowboy outfit!

Despite the lack of forwards at Pim Verbeek's disposal, Australia had the two best goal-scoring opportunities during free play and Schwarzer's magnificent save earned us the vital away point that we so richly deserved and kept our momentum at the top of our group. Post match, Schwarzer came and celebrated with the travelling contingent and threw the ball which he saved from the spot into the crowd as a token of his appreciation of our support. The celebrations kicked on with Mayday and a few other Chinese and Australian supporters at a place appropriately named Disco. If you didn't like Disco, there was always Disco 1 and Disco 2 next door. Regardless of Kunming's diverse bar names, they all had the same drink specials inside – twelve cans of Budweiser beer, a fruit platter and big cup of popcorn all for $15! Bring on Dubai and Doha in July for another Asian experience abroad following the Socceroos into the next phase of World Cup qualification!

By Simon McCuskey

Photos by Simon McCuskey

Left: One lucky Australian supporter collecting the match ball from Mark Schwarzer!

Right: Entering Kunming's Tuodong Stadium

Schwarzer ready to save off the penalty spot!

A few of the Australian supporters with Mayday Zhang (far right) and China's response to Clint Eastwood.

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News Room: (03) 9645-1440
Advertising: (03) 9645-1440

news@goalweekly.com
mailbag@goalweekly.com
www.goalweekly.com

Editor: Costa Koutropoulos
Art Director: Carlos Ibarra
Production: Gagandeep Singh, MJ Ali.

Contributors:
Nat Adamopoulos, Mark Boric, Richard Bartolo, Adrian Ceddia, Bruce Darnell, George Egonidis, Andrew Fisher, Jason Gillick, Steven Gray, Roy Hay, Markian Jaworsky, Paul Jefferies, George Katsamboukas, Eddie Krncevic, John Kyrou, Sebastian Kipman, George Kouroumalis, Michael Lilikakis, Josip Loncaric, Craig MacKenzie, Joe Novella,Jeremy O'Neil, Teo Pellizzeri, Chris Priftis, Walter Pless, Julius Ross, Mike Salter, George Stogiannou, Reuben Schembri, Richard Sucksmith, Lachlan Taylor, Nick Townsend, Elias Simopoulos, Michal Skrodsky, Addy Wetzler, Bruno Zovko,

Photographers:
Daniel Flis, Darryl Kennedy, John Punshon, Steve Starek. Therese Duffy, George Stogiannou.

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JAMIESON STEPS ASIDE

Hodgson takes the reigns at Monterey

Adam Jamieson has become the latest coaching casualty in the Foxtel Cup after resigning from the Frankston Pines post recently.

Jamieson is the third coach in the past fortnight to depart the competition.

Doug Hodgson has been appointed as the new replacement at Monterey Reserve.

Hodgson is also a former Pines player who went on to play professionally in England for Sheffield United.

Jamieson's departure comes on the back end of increased turmoil within the ranks of the Peninsula outfit with the club now languishing bottom of the Foxtel Cup standings and yet to record a win this season.

Recently the club has also seen Peter Skledar take over from Errol Mustafa as President.

Speaking to Goal! Weekly regarding his decision, Jamieson said, 'It was probably time I pushed on so the club could find someone else to take it to the next level. After being there full-time for almost twelve months and not having a win after eight rounds, I've decided maybe the club would like to try another coach. "

Although results haven't been satisfactory on the field it appears that Jamieson felt he did not have the full support of the committee to turn things around.

Jamieson went on to add, "I want to push on as a coach in the Premier League or Division One.

I love the club to death and it's been really hard, to be honest. I've been there a long, long time at the Pines and it's been very, very disappointing."

The club have done a hell of a lot for me over the years, and I know it's hard for a club like the Pines to compete in the Premier League with the money that goes around. I thought we put together a really good side and apart from one hiding, we were good enough for points in all the other games. That's what disappoints me - we worked so hard to get ourselves in a position to be competitive again and to only last for eight weeks is annoying.

"But, that's what happens when you're not getting results, I suppose people are always ready to question a few things that you do."

In his first year as coach, Jamieson lead Pines to the State League One championship and has now indicated that he'll be taking some time out until he's ready return to the coaching game.

"I've still got a hell of a lot to offer and hopefully another club will pick me up pretty soon."

Adam Jamieson and Willie Raynes in happier times at the Foxtel Cup launch in February.

THE SLEUTH

VANIS TO MOVE?

On the coaching front it is rumoured that Vlado Vanis is keen to get the nod from Coburg officials so he can take his leave from Fawkner. Talk about jumping from the frypan into the fire. Maybe the two clubs can make a clean swap, Montemurro for Vanis. That physiologist could really earn his money trying to work that one out.

PINES WIPE OUT

The Frankston Pines exodus continues with a rumoured several players waiting for the May transfer window to open. Among the players looking to move on are Adam Fadljevic, Cameron Jones and Daniel Miller who have been linked to the ailing Fawkner. While we are on the subject of players on the move it is also rumoured that Richmond's Chris Greechan is headed for Western Suburbs after being axed and Coburg's Daniel Rocco, Edemer Garcia and Ahmet Ikiz have also been shown the door. Gully's Matt (Colonel) Sanders is also a wanted man with at least two VPL clubs and a few State One clubs looking to recruit the benched striker, while another bench regular in Phillip Riccobene has attracted the attention of Altona Magic.

GEORGIES CASH IN?

Rumours are circulating that the Georgies have sold their home of the past quarter century for 5 plus Million and are currently in talks with the Werribee council about relocating too Tarneit where a proposed new sporting complex is to be built there in the coming years. It is rumoured that a successful move to the complex will require the club to shed its ethnic affiliation and become mainstream, although one suspects this has already happened…"When's the last time they sold pastizzi at their canteen hey"?

COBURG CONDITIONING

After sacking their conditioning coach in March who was blamed for their first loss of the year, Coburg last week hired the services of a physiologist to probe the minds of their players who have not won a game since round two. The move obviously didn't work as they were hammered three zip by Richmond and had two players were sent off in the process this week. Maybe we can suggest a course of electro shock therapy for this weeks training session, and if that fails they can always go the traditional route and sack their coach.

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FOXTEL CUP STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Green Gully Cavaliers	10	7	2	1	18	5	23
Melbourne Knights	10	6	4	0	19	8	22
Richmond	10	6	2	2	28	9	20
Oakleigh Cannons	9	5	3	1	12	6	18
A.I.S	10	5	1	4	18	14	16
Altona Magic	9	4	3	2	12	9	15
Heidelberg Utd	9	3	4	2	12	11	13
Whittlesea Zebras	9	3	3	3	14	15	12
Preston Lions	9	3	2	4	13	19	11
South Melbourne	9	3	0	6	15	15	9
Coburg Utd	10	2	2	6	9	17	8
Western Suburbs	9	2	1	6	7	19	7
Fawkner Blues	10	1	3	6	9	24	6
Frankston Pines	9	0	2	7	5	20	2

RESULTS

Richmond Eagles	3 - 0	Coburg United
AIS	1 - 2	Melbourne Knights
Green Gully	4 - 0	Preston Lions
Whittlesea Zebras	0 - 0*	Heidelberg United
Altona Magic	0 - 0*	South Melbourne

*Playing tonight

UNDER 21 DETAILS

Fawkner Blues 0 Oakleigh Cannons 2, V.I.S 3 Melbourne Knights 0, Green Gully Cavaliers 1 Preston Lions 0, Richmond 2 Coburg Utd 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Green Gully Cavaliers	10	9	0	1	19	3	27
Richmond	10	7	0	3	26	15	21
Coburg Utd	10	5	2	3	19	12	17
V.I.S	10	4	4	2	16	10	16
Melbourne Knights	10	4	3	3	13	19	15
Frankston Pines	9	4	2	3	9	8	14
Fawkner Blues	9	4	1	4	12	15	10
Altona Magic	9	3	1	5	10	13	10
Oakleigh Cannons	9	2	3	4	10	12	9
Preston Lions	9	2	3	4	10	14	9
Whittlesea Zebras	9	2	1	6	13	19	7
Heidelberg Utd	9	2	1	6	12	19	7
South Melbourne	9	1	4	4	8	15	7
Western Suburbs	8	2	3	3	8	11	6

THE TOP MARKSMEN

Player, Club	Goals
Cardozo, Richard Richmond SC	8
Naidovski, Jason A.I.S	8
Cardozo, Pablo Richmond SC	7
Curcija, Michael Altona Magic SC	7
Nikolic, Joel Green Gully Cavaliers SC	6
Catalano, Michael Richmond SC	5
Lagana, Frankie M Oakleigh Cannons FC	5
Barisic, Andrew Melbourne Knights SC	4
Danning, Kofi D A.I.S	4
De Moraes, Fernando South Melbourne FC	4

ROUND ELEVEN FIXTURES

OAKLEIGH CANNONS
V
ALTONA MAGIC
Jack Edwards Reserve
Fri 2 May KO 8:30PM

A.I.S
V
FAWKNER BLUES
AIS Field 14 (Canberra)
Sat 3 May KO 1:00PM

GREEN GULLY V
WESTERN SUBURBS
Green Gully Reserve
Sat 3 May KO 4:00PM

COBURG UTD
V
WHITTLESEA ZEBRAS
Knights Stadium
Sat 3 May KO 6:00PM

PRESTON LIONS
V
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS
BT Connor Reserve
Sun 4 May KO 3:00PM

SOUTH MELBOURNE
V
RICHMOND EAGLES
Bob Jane Stadium
Sun 4 May KO 4:00PM

HEIDELBERG UTD
V
FRANKSTON PINES
Olympic Village
Sun 4 May KO 5:00PM

Please check the
FFV website
for any fixture changes.

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RICHMOND EAGLES

3 - 0

COBURG UNITED

EAGLES SOAR BACK TO FORM

Coburg sees red as two men sent-off

Steady rain hit Kevin Bartlett Reserve on Saturday night as Richmond and Coburg prepared to battle it out in the Foxtel Cup. The Eagles, smarting after their first loss of the season at Heidelberg United, were forced into several changes by the suspensions of Stuart McCluskey and Pablo Cardozo. Coburg, after a flying start to the season, had slumped into the relegation zone after a loss at Altona Magic the previous week.

The Eagles began promisingly enough, Michael Catalano volleying over with a speculative effort from twenty-five yards after a quick turn in the second minute. A throw-in on the right presented Semir Sivic with the chance to cross, his ball a little too deep for Jesse Krncevic at the far post who volleyed over the goal from a tight angle.

Stuart Webster claimed a couple of crosses from Mustafa Mustafa as the new Richmond central defensive pairing of Dimitri Tsiaras and Noel Bahnsen generally had the better of their opponents. Richie Cardozo should have given the Eagles the lead in the twenty-first minute. George Goutzioulis had found Nick Kalambokis, who passed to Krncevic who flicked the ball out to Cardozo in the clear, who passed up the opportunity to shoot and attempted to round Tomas Kovar in the Coburg goal, the keeper diving at his feet and winning the ball.

Four minutes later Goutzioulis found Sivic, who crossed with his left foot to Catalano who headed wide from ten yards. The visitors then had their best chance of the game after half an hour on the counter attack following a Richmond corner. Turhan Sumbul was set free on the right, racing in on goal with only the advancing Webster to beat. His first strike was blocked by Webster and then he pulled his shot from the rebound across the face of goal. When the half-time whistle came, the score remained 0-0 with both sides having cause for optimism in the second stanza.

Again Richmond, now attacking the Heyington Bridge End, began brightly. The first minute saw Bahnsen sent the ball to Catalano to burst down the left wing with. He cut into the box and had a shot parried by Kovar, with Krncevic hitting the keeper with the rebound and another effort being blocked in a mad scramble.

Richmond continued to test Kovar in the slippery conditions, with Goutzioulis firing in a shot from twenty-five yards which was held on the second grab. In the fifty-third minute Krncevic headed down a Sivic cross which Catalano volleyed on goal, again held by Kovar on the second attempt. Just a minute later Serdar Pir cleared off the line, when Kalambokis beat Kovar with a header from a cross by Aaran Lines. Lines pulled the ball back two minutes later for Goutzioulis to shoot, the effort going wide. Lines was finding plenty of room, and his clipped ball to Catalano saw another shot cleared off the line.

In the fifty-sixth minute Kalambokis conceded a free kick when closing down Ahmet Gurpinar and trying to nip the ball off his toes. Gurpinar then lashed out at Kalambokis, earning a straight red card. Despite the advantage of an extra man, Richmond's luck in front of goal didn't look like changing. When Kovar spilled a shot from Goutzioulis and Krncevic buried the rebound, they were denied by the assistant referee's flag. In the seventy-second minute Coburg were down to nine men when Brett Gilmour was dismissed after his heavy tackle chopped down Tsiaras in the centre circle. Tsiaras had been superb in marshalling the Richmond defence, and it was a relief to the Eagles bench that he was eventually able to continue after enduring his second red-card inducing challenge in as many home games.

Richmond finally found a goal through Goutzioulis in the seventy-fifth minute. Picking up the ball at the top of the box, he weaved past a defender, then turned past another after the ball almost got away from him. Another twist saw him advance to the penalty spot where it appeared he had been brought down by a tackle, the penalty appeal made redundant as he connected with the ball on his way down to send it into the back of the net.

Sivic shot over from thirty yards after seventy-eight minutes. The advantage of the extra men saw Richmond bring the game to a standstill as they pondered the numerous options going forward. In the eighty-first minute Catalano found space on the right when his marker fell down after a collision. He carried the ball inside and launched a strike from the edge of the box which gave the Eagles their second goal of the game. The scoring was completed in the eighty-ninth minute, when substitute James Kalifatidis burst down the left and cut the ball into the box where Memet Karakilic put the ball into his own net under pressure from Richie Cardozo.

The result leaves Richmond back amongst the mix at the top of the table, with Coburg awaiting the transfer window to make the changes which will hopefully re-ignite their season.

Richmond: S.Webster, A.Lines, D.Tsiaras, J.Krncevic, S.Sivic, G.Goutzioulis (S.Rexhepi 89'), R.Cardozo, M.Catalano, Z.Cvetkovski (B.Beni 87'), N.Bahnsen, N.Kalambokis (J.Kalifatidis 87').

Goals: Goutzioulis 75' Catalano 81' Karakicic (O.G) 89'

Yellow Cards: Cvetkovski 60' Lines 66'

Red Cards: None

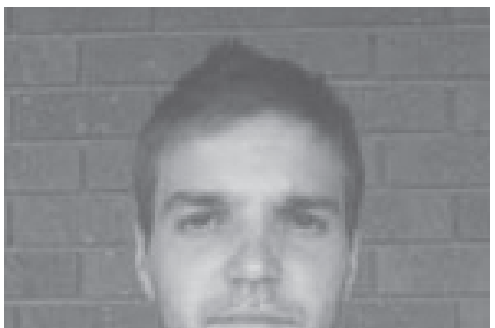
Coburg United: T.Kovar, S.Kovacevic, S.Pir, B.Gilmour, A.Gurpinar, R.Thompson, A.Josifovski (M.Karakilic 83'), A.Magnacca, M.Mustafa, P.Tichy (T.Baser 83'), T.Sumbul (C.Ucarli 83').

Yellow Cards: Thompson 26'

Red Cards: Gurpinar 65' Gilmour 72'

Man of the Match:
Dimitri Tsiaras
(Richmond)

Venue: Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Crowd: 350



Dimi Tsiaris capped of a fine night for the Eagles with a man of the match performance in central defence.

Michael Catalano scored his fifth goal of the Foxtel Cup campaign keeping the Eagles in contention for top six honours.

George Goutzioulis marked his return to the Richmond starting line-up with his third goal of the season.

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By Mark Boric

Photos by John Punshon

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ALTONA MAGIC

V

SOUTH MELBOURNE

MAGIC AWAITS

KO 8.15pm at Paisley Park

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

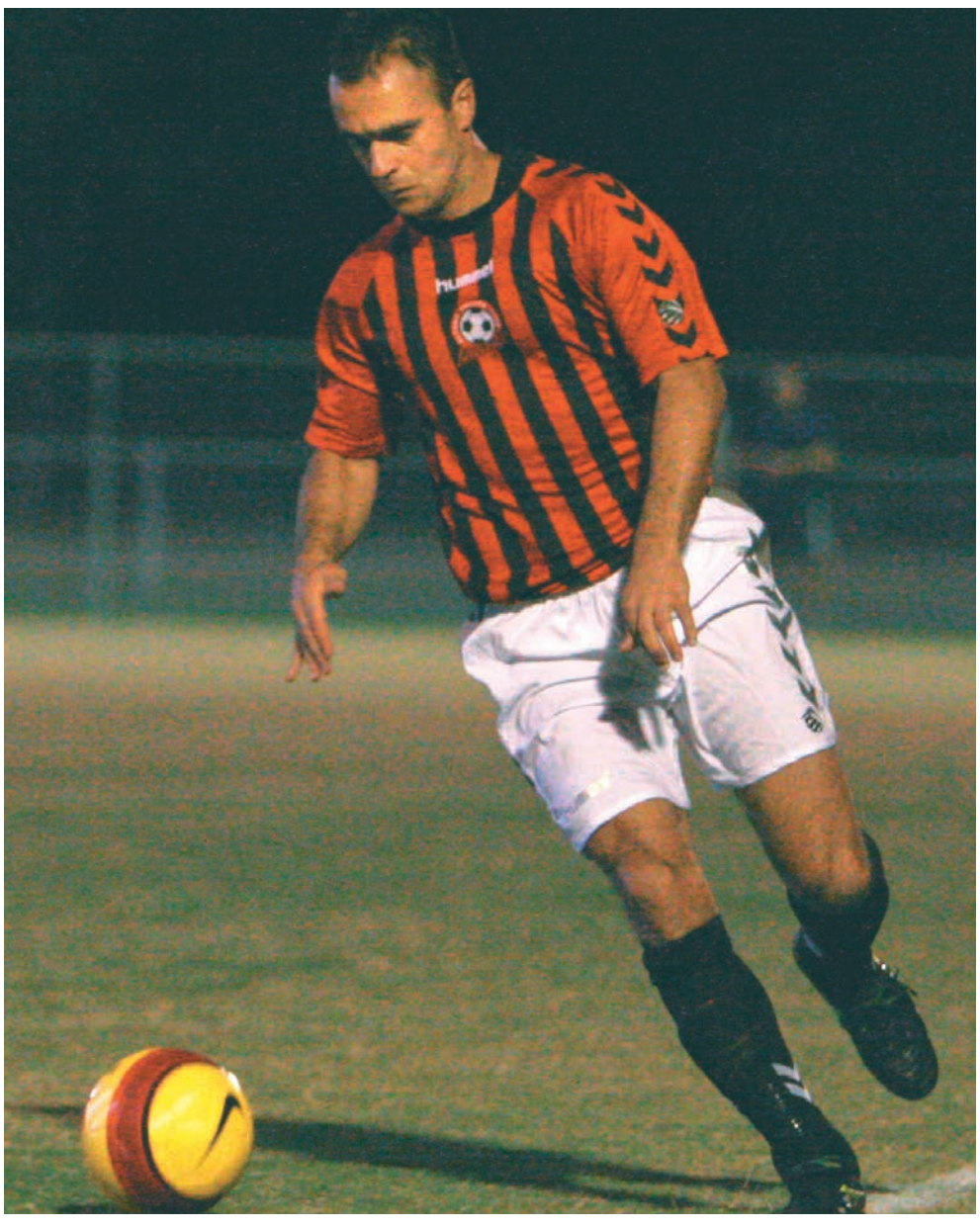
This game should be a very interesting and competitive game between Altona Magic and South Melbourne in a replay of the 2006 VPL Grand Final.

Both teams had relatively easy wins last weekend over teams in the lower reaches of the Foxtel Cup table. South handed new coach Michael Michalakopoulos his first win in charge of the Bob Jane outfit with a thumping of strugglers Fawkner Blues by a score of six goals to two. Altona come into this match after travelling to Knights Stadium and making pretty easy work of a very poor North Coburg outfit with a 2-1 scoreline.

Recent form of both teams has been somewhat patchy. The home side Altona have two wins, one draw and two losses in their past 5 outings - these two losses are their only defeats so far this season. In these five previous games, the Magic have scored six goals and conceded six goals and occupy the last of the Top Six positions with a total of fifteen points. After an indifferent start to its 2008 campaign, comprising some poor results and the departure of John Anastasiadis, South lie tenth at the moment on nine points and their last five games have seen three defeats and two victories, scoring eight goals and concede ten.

Altona were pretty much untroubled by North Coburg last week and players like Henry Fa'arodo ran riot. He will again be key to this team's chance of success on Monday night. His intelligent running, pace and work-rate off the ball make him a handful for any defence. Much will be expected of Michael Curcija also, his seven goals so far this season indicating he is still a deadly marksman in the Foxtel Cup, although he hasn't had quite the impact this season as previous seasons.

With a new coach at the helm and a new sense of belief, South Melbourne will be hoping to carry on its goal-scoring exploits from last week. Against a traditionally tough Magic team at Paisley Park tonight, South will have to be on top of its game if it stands any chance of breaking the home team's defence.



Altona Magic will be looking towards the versatile and experienced Agim Sherifovski to combat any threats from the visiting South Melbourne.

Based upon last week's hiding handed to the Blues, it appears that a change of coach is perhaps the tonic that was required at Bob Jane to kick-start their season.

T

wo weeks into the job Michalakopoulos will no doubt be starting to make his mark in his new role, implementing his ideas and methods into a side that on paper, has the quality to launch a concerted ride up the VPL ladder. When you look at Fernando De Moraes, Adam Van Dommel, Dean Anastasiadis and the like, they have a very experienced core with a blend of some upcoming youngsters around them.

I think all these stats point to a game where you will get goals scored tonight. Both defences have been rather porous lately and both teams have the forwards capable of exploiting these brittle defences. This contest would well be worth coming out to Paisley Park, Altona with an 8:15pm KO to see what I think will be a very open and entertaining game with two sides who will be pushing hard for a win.

My prediction is a 3-1 victory for the visiting team. Michalakopoulos will continue his promising start in charge of the team he played for as a player with distinction.

By Reuben Schembri

Photo by Peter Kakalias

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WHITTLESEA ZEBRAS

V

HEIDELBERG UNITED

STRIVING FOR TOP SIX

KO 8.15pm at Epping Stadium

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL

This is a Foxtel Cup battle of two mid-table sides, both with fairly similar records and within striking distance of the Top Six.

Tonight's contest will surely make for an interesting and competitive clash when these two sides collide in the other of the two Monday night games scheduled at Epping Sports Stadium with an 8:15pm KO.

In last week's round of fixtures the Zebras sent the boys from Frankston Pines packing with a convincing three goals to nil victory. The Bergers on the other hand caused somewhat of an upset, defeating the high flying Richmond Eagles by a single Eric Vassaliadis goal. Both teams therefore head into tonight's clash looking to extend that winning feeling.

Although winless and entrenched in the relegation zone after the first six rounds, the Zebras have in the last five games, won three and drawn twice - scoring eleven goals and conceding only six. Hard work has seen them claw their way up from the lower end of the ladder to a comfortable mid table spot and on the verge of cracking the Top Six.

Heidelberg in their last five games have managed to win only once. Apart from last week's surprise victory over Richmond , the Bergers can only boast of two drawn games and lost two games - scoring seven goals and conceding eight goals. An array of new faces are still to settle at the Village, as coach George Katsakis continues to tinker with a squad that holds much promise, but has yet to deliver. Daniel Jones has shone and come to the rescue more than once this year for the Bergers, while Steve Martin seems to be doing a similar job for the Zebras.

Up front, the Zebras boast last season's top goalscorer from Western Australia, Jerry Karpeh. A gifted player with exceptional touch, Karpeh has shown glimpses of skill that earned him a spot in the A-league with Perth Glory. However, like most forwards needs to deliver on a more consistent basis.

The same could be said at the other end for the Bergers' new signing during the off-season Mark Tsiorlas. Often the saviour of the Fawkner Blues in recent times, Mark was brought in to solve the attack at the Village, and although he's shown signs of competiveness, has yet to find the net on a regular basis as was the case when he was at the Blues. It's early days yet, but a return to his old stamping ground tonight, might just be the trigger Mark requires to start storming the goalscoring charts once again.

Overall, on their day both teams can play some very good football. Similarly, a sprinkle of frustration is never too far away either.

They can both flatter to deceive, so it's a matter of which team turns up on the day prepared to set themselves up for a genuine push into the Top Six. That alone will be ample incentive for both coaches to chase three points. The Zebras will be looking to the likes of Steve Martin, Ross Antoniadis and Gregory Lombardo to lead their team whilst Eric Vassaliadis and Joe Kozic both return to their former sid, keen to make an impact on the game

My prediction is an entertaining 1-1 draw.

By Reuben Schembri

Photo by John Punshon

Eric Vasissiliadis makes a return to Epping Stadium tonight with Heidelberg United to face his former club.

After a slow start to the year the Whittlesea Zebras are looking to make it four wins in a row and continue its push towards the Top Six.

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ON THE BOX

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	11.55 pm	Fox 3
Sat May 3	**Aston Villa v Wigan**	
	11.55 pm	Fox 3
Sat May 3	**Blackburn v Derby**	
	11.55 pm	Fox 3
Sat May 3	**Middlesbrough v Portsmouth**	
	11.55 pm	Fox 3
Sat May 3	**Reading v Tottenham**	
	11.55 pm	Fox 3
Sun May 4	**Bolton v Sunderland**	
	2.10 am	Fox 3
Sun May 4	**Arsenal v Everton**	
	10.25 pm	Fox 2
Mon May 5	**Liverpool v Manchester City**	
	12.55 am	Fox 2
Tues May 6	**Newcastle v Chelsea**	
	12.55 am	Fox 2

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Tues Apr 29	**West Brom v Southampton**	
	4.30 am	Fox 1
Sun May 4	**Final Day Of Season**	
	10.00 pm	Fox 1

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English Football Pub Quiz ? ?

1. Where was the 1998 World Cup held?
.....

2. Who was the first black footballer to win a full England cap?
.....

3. What football club did Martin Peters play for when he won his 1966 World Cup medal?
.....

4. Which manager took England to the semi-final of the world cup in 1990?
.....

5 .It is said that an international football match in 1969 started a war between which two nations in the central Americas?
.....

6 Which team did England beat in the 1990 World Cup when Gary Lineker's second successful penalty of the game gave England victory in extra time?
.....

7. What football club did Alan Ball play for when he won his 1966 World Cup medal?
.....

8. Who scored England's dying seconds winner against Belgium in the 1990 World Cup?
.....

9. Which past England captain is the only player in English football to have captained an English Football League-winning club in three different decades?
.....

10. Who was the first £2m football transfer between English clubs?
.....

11. Where and when were the three World Cup tournaments that England failed to qualify for after 1966?
.....

12. Who appeared most times for England and how many times?
.....

13. What was the score after extra time before England lost on penalties to Portugal in the quarter final of the European Championship in June 2004?
.....

14. In what World Cup did the England goals by Mariner, Robson and Francis feature in games against France, Czechoslovakia and Kuwait?
.....

goal! Weekly

Answers

1. France 2. Viv Anderson, 1978 3. West Ham United 4. Bobby Robson 5. El Salvador v Honduras 6. Cameroon 7. Blackpool (he transferred to Everton in August 1966 for a then record fee of £110,000.) 8. David Platt 9. Tony Adam 10. Paul Gasgoigne (from Newcastle to Tottenham in 1988) 11. West Germany 1974, Argentina 1978 and USA 1994 12. Peter Shilton, 125 caps 13. 2-2 (Portugal won the penalty shoot-out 6-5) 14. Spain 1982

This former English international can help you with question 12.

GOAL! WEEKLY MAILBAG

Want to get something off your chest?

mailbag@goalweekly.com

Dear Goal! Weekly,

Please take this letter in the manner its intended and not as a criticism of your brilliant publication.

I think you lads do an awesome job putting the paper together each week. I must say, I look forward to getting to Southern Cross station on a Monday afternoon and grabbing a copy of Goal! Weekly to quietly enjoy reading on my trip home.

All I did want to say was that last Friday, Anzac Day, the AIS were playing a designated 'home' fixture in Ballarat against the Melbourne Knights.

I was a little disappointed to see that no special mention of this was made in last week's edition.

Especially seeing as there are no other VPL or state league games scheduled for that Friday.

As a curtain raiser, the Ballarat Red Devils took on Nth Geelong Warriors in a battle for State League 2 NW supremacy.

What is more disappointing is the lack of enthusiasm and promotion from the FFV regarding the fixture.

With the AIS displaying the best young talent in Australia and the Knights being one of the top sides of this year's VPL you'd think they'd look to promote the game to some extent.

What I would like to add though, is that the Red Devils initiated this fixture and have worked very hard in getting the venue, Austar Arena, home of the North Ballarat Roosters VFL team up to VPL standard to host the occasion. The FFV eventually saw the benefits in playing the game in Ballarat but all the work in organising etc has come from the Red Devils board and them alone.

The club worked extensively in promoting the game locally and there was a big build up in the local media as we headed closer to Friday with TV Commercials, radio spots and articles in the daily Ballarat Courier.

Potentially the biggest VPL crowd of the season was in attendance.

It's a shame that more people don't know about these fixtures as it could have made the attendance even greater and enjoyed a great afternoon/evening of football at a top class venue and also showcase Ballarat as something more than just another country town.

Yours in football,
B.Leyden
Creswick

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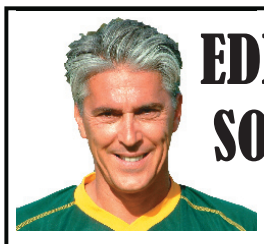

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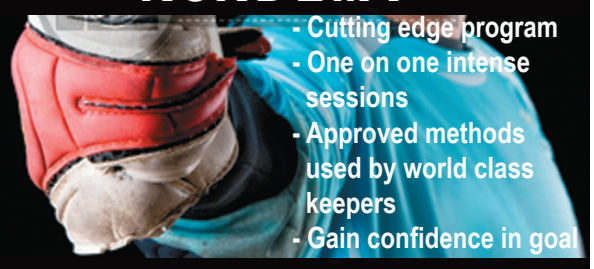

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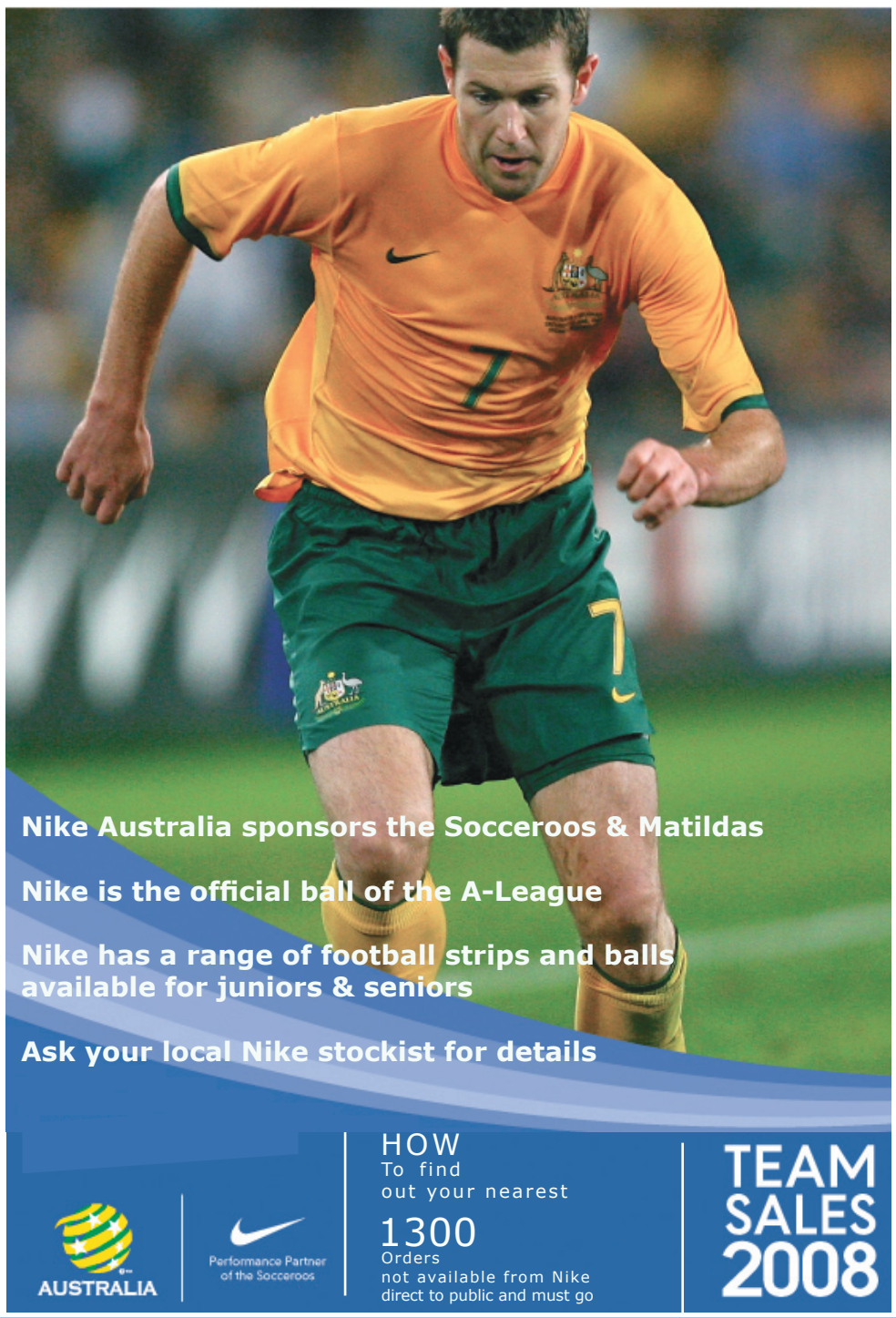

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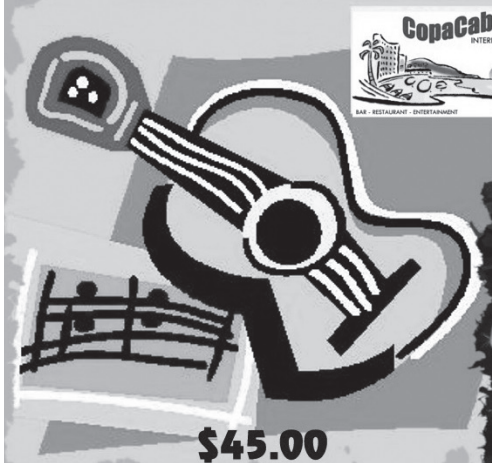

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Clubs no longer with us: No 1 Carlton

THE MANY FACES OF CARLTON

A name rich in Victorian sporting history leaves its mark

Dave Twydell has written a series of books about clubs in the United Kingdom which are defunct and our editor said to me the other day it would be interesting to tell the stories of some of the Victorian clubs which are no longer with us.

Most people will remember the Carlton club which burst on to the National Soccer League scene in 1997 and disappeared equally spectacularly after 8 rounds of the 2000–01 season. But that was not by any means the first club of that name.

There was a Carlton among the very first clubs to play the game in Victoria in 1883. Describing a match between Richmond and Carlton, the Australasian noted 'The form of play generally was hardly up to cup form, although considerable improvement was visible among those who had practised'. In addition to the Melbourne and South Melbourne clubs, Prahran was now taking part in matches.

On Tuesday 1 July 1884, the Richmond and Carlton clubs played a demonstration match on Corio Oval in Geelong. Next day, the Geelong Advertiser carried a lengthy match report, detailing the teams, aspects of the rules which would be puzzling to observers, an estimate of crowd numbers and some critical comment on the code in comparison with the domestic game.

'Some of the players exhibited much dexterity, but no excitement was created, and nearly all present voted the pastime decidedly slow, after the purely Australian method of playing football'. Spence for the red and whites scored the first goal early in the second half, and Ware equalised for the blues late in the game, so it ended one-all. The referee was a Mr. Gibbs, A. E. Gibbs, one of the pioneers of the game in New Zealand and Australia, who was later to be the representative of Australian soccer on the Football Association council in England.

In 1890, Carlton beat South Melbourne to win the Beaney Cup for the third year in succession and it had also held the George and George Cup for a similar period.

The depression of the 1890s hit Victorian football hard and it has been impossible to trace any matches in this dire period.

When the economy and inward migration picked up again in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Victorian League was reorganised and won by Carlton United in 1909 and 1910. It also won the Dockerty Cup in both these years. Williamstown, Yarraville and Melbourne Thistle were the other league champions before the competition was abandoned in 1916. The same clubs with the addition of St Kilda won the Dockerty Cup. By 1913 there was an eight-team league, with six reserve teams. The interstate series continued. In 1914 and 1915, competition continued despite the outbreak of the First World War, but then was abandoned for the duration.

Soccer matches in Victoria resumed in 1919 with a new record attendance being established in a second-round Dockerty Cup match between Northumberland and Durhams and Melbourne Thistle at Middle Park on 3 July 1920. The First Division of the League now had twelve teams with matches being played at Middle Park and reserve games at Spotswood. A host of new clubs was formed including Box Hill (1922), Yallourn (1923), Coburg (1918), Heidelberg (1925), Brighton (1924), South Yarra (1928) and Hakoah (1927). But there was no Carlton club as such until after the Second World War.

A new club called Carlton took part in the VSF competition from 1972 to 1984. This Carlton club was backed by the Serbian community. It played at a variety of grounds including John Cain Memorial Park in Thornbury, near the current FFV headquarters in 1977. At that time it was in Provisional League Division Two. It was promoted to Division One for the 1981 season playing at Como Park. The Carlton name disappeared for the 1985 season, but members of the club became involved with Fitzroy City.

There was also a club called North Carlton Olympic, which played in VSF competitions from 1968 to 1976. Russell Butler remembers that Olympic won the Armstrong Cup for reserve teams in 1974. The Federation was upset because the club had not entered the Dockerty Cup but instead used its first team players in the reserves competition.

So the team which was set up with the support of the Australian Rules club at Princes Park in 1997 was the third or perhaps the fifth to call itself Carlton, but it had no links with earlier clubs of that name. Coached by Edi Krncevic, Carlton reached the National Soccer League Grand Final in its first season, losing narrowly to South Melbourne, in an all-Victorian game. Con Boutsianis got a late winner for South Melbourne with a long range special. Two brilliant youngsters, Simon Colosimo and Marco Bresciano, played for Carlton that day. Thereafter results fluctuated. Carlton was eleventh in 1999, third in 2000, and then withdrew in the following season amid acrimony and disappointment

Left: John Markovski played a total of 60 games for Carlton and scored 18 goals.

Right: The squad which made its NSIL debut in 1997/98. Former Carlton SC players also include Marco Bresciano, Vince Grella, Archie Thompson and Joshua Kennedy, all members of Australia's squad for the 2006 FIFA World Cup as well as former internationals Simon Colosimo and Andrew Marth and A-League players Daniel Allsopp, Robbie Middleby and Andrew Packer.

Left: Carlton SC made it to the NSL grand final in its first season. It finished runner-up to South Melbourne before being dissolved in 2000. According to some reports former owner of the club, sports agent Peter Jess, is still receiving significant payments when former Carlton players transfer between clubs in Europe

Words by Roy Hay

Photos provided by Roy Hay

Round 6

TOP TEAMS DROP 100% RECORD

Inter draws, Sandy and Lions lose

It's been an interesting week of results in the WPL, with all three sides that had a 100% winning record prior to Round 6 dropping points, and every team within the competition now having registered a point. There's no change at the top of the ladder, despite all the top three sides failing to win, but plenty of movement within the body of the ladder, as teams continue to battle for ascendancy.

A pair from Melanie Camilleri for Heidelberg United ended Preston Lions' flying start to the season, and inflicted its first defeat for the season. United bounced back quickly from its surprising 4-3 defeat at Eltham last Sunday, to chalk up its fourth victory of the season, and hold on to fifth position on the ladder. The game was delicately poised at half time, with the sides locked at nil all, but Camilleri was the difference in the second period, as she secured the points for the home side. Despite the loss, Preston remain third on the ladder, two points clear of Ashburton.

Box Hill Inter's winning run came to an end at Beischer Oval on Saturday, when it was held to a goalless draw by a resurgent Bendigo Vipers side. The regional team had recorded its first win of the season midweek, defeating GSL 3-2 at DISC, and, with its draw against Ashburton last weekend, it looks to be turning the corner after a poor start to the campaign. Inter's cause was not aided by the red carding of Jessica Humble, which left the visitor with only ten players, but it was able to maintain parity and hold Bendigo out. Inter remains atop the WPL ladder, a point clear of Sandringham and Preston, while Bendigo has made a rapid ascension to seventh.

A second-half onslaught from Ashburton blew away Eastern Lions at Gardiners Creek on Saturday, as the visiting side returned to winning ways. Just one goal to the good at half time, Ashburton scored a further five goals without reply after the interval, to claim its fourth victory of the campaign. Seyma Erenli and Christina Pfeiffer both scored doubles, with Emma Natoli and Kelly Eaton also on the scoresheet. It was Eastern Lions' fifth straight defeat, and it drops to the foot of the ladder, while Ashburton is in the considerably rosier position of fourth.

GSL produced a major upset at Latrobe City Sports Club on Saturday, as it defeated the previously unbeaten Sandringham 2-1. The result was all the more impressive, given that Sandringham had not even conceded a goal prior to this match, let alone lost a game. The sides were all square at one apiece at half time, with goals from Kirstie Shearing for GSL, and the prolific Eliza Gleadell for Sandringham, with her fourth goal in three games. However, Shearing popped up to score her second after the interval and secure the three points for the home side. The victory, GSL's second of the season, lifts it to eighth on the ladder, while Sandringham remains second despite the defeat.

Having entered the round as the only WPL team yet to pick up a point, Keilor Park rectified that statistic in no uncertain terms, defeating the unpredictable Eltham North 5-2 at Keilor Park Reserve on Sunday. Three first half goals without reply set Keilor well on its way to victory. The second half proved to be much tighter, with both sides finding the net twice, but it was the home side that emerged with the points. Tijen Hussein bagged a brace for Keilor, with singles from Kerri Little, Katia Tavalaro and Lauren Farrugia, while Deanna Niceski and Stephanie Simpson were on target for Eltham. Keilor lifts itself off the foot of the ladder with its first win of the season, and ends the round in eleventh place, while Eltham is in sixth.

The final game of the round was at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday, where South Melbourne and Casey Comets battled out a goalless draw to share the points. With both sides having only won one game prior to the match, it was a match that each team will have viewed as eminently winnable, but ultimately neither side could find a way through. Strong goalkeeping from both Emma Bracken in the Casey net, and South custodian Sarah McKeon meant that the match finished goalless, despite the best efforts of both teams' strikers. The sides are level on four points each, with South ahead of Casey in ninth on goal difference.

More midweek action in the WPL this coming week, as Eltham North takes on Ashburton at Anderson Park in its rescheduled Round 2 encounter. Then Round 7 takes off on Friday night with the top versus bottom clash between Box Hill Inter and Eastern Lions at Wembley Park. Saturday's action is at Kingston Heath Soccer Complex, when Sandringham takes on Preston Lions in a meeting between second and third. On Sunday, Casey Comets hosts Bendigo Vipers at Comets Stadium, while Keilor Park Reserve sees Keilor Park take on old rival Heidelberg United. Ashburton plays GSL at Ashburton Park, while Eltham North and South Melbourne face off at Anderson Park in a Sunday evening match.

Aimee Benton (South Melbourne) stepping over the ball in an effort to lose her marker, Vanessa Hellar (Casey Comets)

By Niki Cook

Photo by John Punshon

WPL ROUND SIX RESULTS

Heidelberg Utd 2 (M Camilleri 2) Preston Lions 0, Bendigo Vipers 0 Box Hill Inter 0, Eastern Lions 0 Ashburton 6 (S Erenli 2 E Natoli C Pfeiffer 2 K Eaton), GSL 2 (KM Shearing 2) Sandringham 1 (E Gleadell), Keilor Park 5 (K Tavolaro K Little L Farrugia T Hussein 2) Eltham North 2 (D Niceski S Simpson), South Melbourne 0 Casey Comets 0,

WPL STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Box Hill Inter	6	5	1	0	16	3	16
Sandringham	6	5	0	1	13	2	15
Preston Lions	6	5	0	1	8	4	15
Ashburton	5	4	1	0	15	2	13
Heidelberg Utd	6	4	0	2	17	11	12
Eltham North	5	2	0	3	13	11	6
Bendigo Vipers	6	1	3	2	4	7	6
GSL	6	2	0	4	11	16	6
South Melbourne	6	1	1	4	9	13	4
Casey Comets	6	1	1	4	6	14	4
Keilor Park	6	1	0	5	8	19	3
Eastern Lions	6	0	1	5	1	19	1

WPL ROUND 7 FIXTURES

Box Hill Inter v Eastern Lions
Wembley Park
Fri 2 May KO 8:30PM

Sandringham v Preston Lions
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
Sat 3 May KO 3:00PM

Casey Comets v Bendigo Vipers
Comets Stadium
Sun 4 May KO 1:00PM

Keilor Park v Heidelberg Utd
Keilor Park Reserve
Sun 4 May KO 1:00PM

Ashburton v GSL
Ashburton Park
Sun 4 May KO 3:00PM

Eltham North v South Melbourne
Anderson Park
Sun 4 May KO 8:00PM

WPL RESERVES RESULTS

Heidelberg Utd 0 Preston Lions 0, Bendigo Vipers 2 Box Hill Inter 3, Eastern Lions 0 Ashburton 18, GSL 0 Sandringham 5, Keilor Park 4 Eltham North 0, South Melbourne 4 Casey Comets 2

WPL RESERVES STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Box Hill Inter	6	6	0	0	21	5	18
Ashburton	5	5	0	0	37	2	15
Heidelberg Utd	6	4	1	1	16	5	13
Sandringham	6	4	0	2	30	6	12
Keilor Park	6	4	0	2	15	8	12
Preston Lions	6	3	2	1	16	8	11
Bendigo Vipers	6	3	0	3	16	12	9
GSL	6	1	2	3	9	15	5
Casey Comets	6	1	0	5	11	20	3
South Melbourne	6	1	0	5	7	33	3
Eastern Lions	6	0	1	5	4	46	1
Eltham North	5	0	0	5	0	22	0

SUNSHINING FOR GEORGIES!

Saints, Westgate grind it out in local derby

The Sunshine Georgies have extended their winning streak in State League Division One to four matches with a 3-0 defeat of Langwarrin at Chaplin Reserve on Saturday afternoon.

A shaky first half for both sides produced few genuine opportunities, leaving the two teams to head into the break with no goals. After the break however, Sunshine took charge, playing in the manner which fans have come to expect after their outstanding start to the season, scoring three goals through Vasko Trpcevski (twice), and Paul Wilson. The win maintains the Georgies' five point buffer at the top of the ladder, pending the result of the Sunday evening fixture (the result not available at time of writing).

Meanwhile, Keilor Park scored their first points for the season in their 1-1 draw with the Bentleigh Greens at Kingston Heath Soccer Complex on Saturday. Both Keilor and the Greens were on the board in the first half, with a goal to Bentleigh's Rados Tomic, after which Keilor's Mathew Nikolic scored his side's first goal of the season. Keilor Park was then made to defend valiantly after the break to prevent the Greens from scoring again, determined not to waste the chance to take a point from the match.

Also determined not to waste their opportunity was FC Clifton Hill who vaulted into equal fourth place after defeating the Bulleen Royals 2-1 in Saturday afternoon's final fixture at Kevin Bartlett Reserve. Clifton Hill took the lead early in the first half with a goal to Zoran Romanovski, however the Royals cancelled out the goal after half time with an equaliser to Frank Tramontana. The home side did not give up at this though, toiling hard for George Karkaletsis to score the winner and provide Clifton Hill with their second win of the season.

At the Grange Reserve on Saturday evening, Kingston City and the Dandenong Thunder played out a lacklustre scoreless draw. The two sides appeared unwilling to take initiative, and consequently seemed to have been quite satisfied with the solitary point which leaves both teams remaining mid-table.

St Albans and Westgate also had to settle for a single point after their 1-1 draw at Churchill Reserve on Sunday afternoon, although both sides came close to breaking the deadlock in the second half. After first half goals to the Saints' Josip Loncaric and Westgate's Robert Trajanovski, the two teams were looking to score the winner in the second half. However, this goal never arrived, leaving the sides with a deserved draw, which sees the Saints maintain third position, and Westgate in seventh position on goal difference.

Tony Toutzaris (Clifton Hill) kicks the ball over his head as Bulleen Royals player challenges.

State League One Action: Luke Grounds (Clifton Hill) nips in ahead of Matthew Leckie (Bulleen Royals).

By Jeremy O'Neill

Photo by John Punshon

SL1 ROUND FOUR RESULTS

Sunshine Georgies 3 (V Trpcevski 2 PA Wilson) Langwarrin 0, Bentleigh Greens 1 (R Tomic) Keilor Park 1 (M Nikolic), FC Clifton Hill 2 (Z Romanovski G Karkaletsis) Bulleen Royals 1 (F Tramontana), Kingston City 0 Dandenong Thunder 0, St Albans Saints 1 (J Loncaric) Westgate 1 (R Trajanovski),

SL1 STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Sunshine Georgies	4	4	0	0	7	0	12
Southern Stars	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
St Albans Saints	4	2	1	1	7	5	7
Bentleigh Greens	4	1	3	0	7	5	6
FC Clifton Hill	4	2	0	2	6	9	6
Dandenong Thunder	4	1	2	1	6	5	5
Westgate	4	1	1	2	6	6	4
Bulleen Royals	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Kingston City	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Langwarrin	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Springvale White Eagles	3	1	0	2	2	5	3
Keilor Park	4	0	1	3	1	6	1

NEXT ROUND

Keilor Park v FC Clifton Hill
Keilor Park Reserve
Sat 3 May KO 3:00PM

Langwarrin v Bentleigh Greens
Lawton Park Reserve
Sat 3 May KO 3:00PM

Southern Stars v St Albans Saints
Ross Reserve
Sat 3 May KO 3:00PM

Westgate v Sunshine Georgies
Ardeer Reserve
Sat 3 May KO 7:00PM

Springvale WE v Kingston City
Serbian Sports Centre
Sun 4 May KO 6:15PM

Bulleen Royals v Dandenong Thunder
Veneto Social Club
Mon 5 May KO 8:15PM

RESERVES RESULTS

Sunshine Georgies 1 Langwarrin 1, Bentleigh Greens 0 Keilor Park 3, FC Clifton Hill 1 Bulleen Royals 0, Kingston City 0 Dandenong Thunder 1, St Albans Saints 1 Westgate 1,

RESERVES STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PT
Keilor Park	4	3	1	0	10	5	10
Bentleigh Greens	4	3	0	1	13	7	9
FC Clifton Hill	4	3	0	1	6	9	9
Langwarrin	4	2	2	0	7	2	8
Southern Stars	3	2	1	0	7	3	7
Westgate	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Bulleen Royals	4	2	0	2	6	3	6
Dandenong Thunder	4	1	1	2	7	9	4
Sunshine Georgies	4	0	3	1	6	8	3
St Albans Saints	4	0	1	3	2	8	1
Springvale White Eagles	3	0	0	3	2	8	0
Kingston City	4	0	0	4	4	11	0

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RODRIGO VARGAS

MELBOURNE VICTORY FC

FULL NAME: Rodrigo Vargas
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BIRTH DATE: 28th October 1978
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WEIGHT: 82kg
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REPRESENTATIVE HONOURS: Victorian State Team
CHILDHOOD FOOTBALL HERO: Maradona
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FAVOURITE A-LEAGUE PLAYER: Sash Ognenovski
FAVOURITE FORMER SOCCEROO: Mehmet Durakovic
FAVOURITE CURRENT SOCCEROO: Vince Grella
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MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A FAN: Australia v Japan, World Cup, Germany 2006
MOST MEMORABLE GOAL YOU'VE SCORED: They're all special.
FUNNIEST MOMENT IN FOOTBALL: Playing alongside Dean Fak and Zoran Markovski
BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Not playing A-league with my brother, Andy
WORST INJURY: Medial ligament tear
MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT: Archie Thompson
FAVOURITE AWAY GROUND: Suncorp Stadium, Qld
SUPERSTITIONS: None
TYPICAL MATCH DAY MEAL: Pasta with chicken
WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS: Reading the game
WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES: I can tell you, but then I'd have to kill you!
FAVOURITE TEAM WHEN GROWING UP: Everton
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTS: AFL
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTSPERSON: Michael Jordan
FAVOURITE FOODS: Chicken
FAVOURITE ACTOR/ACTRESS: Al Pacino
HOBBIES: Spending time with my nephew
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FAVOURITE NIGHTSPOT: My bed
IDEAL DATE: Kate Beckinsdale
FAVOURITE TV SHOWS: The Simpsons
FAVOURITE MUSIC: Praise and worship
FAVOURITE FILM: Braveheart
LAST SOCCER SHIRT YOU BOUGHT: Melbourne Victory
FUNNIEST RUMOUR YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT YOURSELF: Nothing major really
BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER: My parents and brother
BIGGEST DRAG IN SOCCER: Core training
FOOTBALL AMBITION: To stay fit and healthy
WHICH PERSON IN THE WORLD WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET? : Jesus
YOUR TIP FOR THIS YEAR'S A-LEAGUE: Victory of course!

Photo by Daniel Flis

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AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT

1 - 2

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

KNIGHTS STRIKE GOLD IN BALLARAT

Last gasp winner secures three points

Alex Kiratzoglou's strike a minute before time has secured Melbourne Knights an important three points in a tricky fixture against the A.I.S at Austar Arena in Ballarat.

A healthy crowd consisting of Ballarat locals and travelling Knights fans welcomed the teams onto a wet and slippery Austar Arena, the home of VFL Side North Ballarat. The Knights made no changes to the team that drew with Oakleigh last week, whereas A.I.S were missing young gun Jason Hoffman.

The wet conditions made it difficult for either team to pass effectively, it was clear from the onset the young boys from Canberra were not going to be pushed around by the more physical Knights outfit. Pelikan had the first shot at goal within the first minute, but was unable to hit the target.

Kofi Danning and Jason Naidovski have been in blistering form for the A.I.S, both caused defensive headaches for the visitors with their speed and first touch.

A.I.S deservedly hit the lead in the 11th minute, when a free kick was squared at the back post allowing the unmarked Daniel Mullen to poke the ball home. All their good early work however was undone when Sam Munro showed his studs in a tackle, and was shown his marching orders in the 25th minute.

The Foxtel Cup comes to Ballarat as the AIS and Melbourne Knights prepare battle.

Ivan Franjic cancels out the AIS opener with a bullet equalizer just after half-time.

Although the Knights were a man up, they found it difficult to break down the disciplined home defence. Zoran Petrevski created himself a chance when he beat the keeper to the ball, but was unable to keep the ball in play.

Towards the end of the first half, the Knights pressed the home side and began to create some clear cut chances, Franjic crossed in some dangerous balls while Pelikan and Elvin drew saves from Birghitti. Fondyke forced a save of Ozdemir after an A.I.S counter attack.

The Knights burst out of the blocks in the second half, and found themselves an equalizer in the 48th minute courtesy of a Franjic top corner bullet from just inside the area.

The visitors could have taken the lead just three minutes later as a Matkovic cross was just cleared by a diving defender. Both sides make tactical substitutions in order to secure the three points, but it was Petrevski who was guilty of missing the best chance of the game, after picking up on a loose back pass and with plenty of time, he unable to round the keeper.

As the Knights continued to press, the A.I.S looked dangerous on the break. Naidovski and Danning teamed up and caused some worries in the Knights defence, but lacked the support from the midfield.

With time ticking away, Pelikan was played onside on the right, his shot from a tough angle forced a corner which by this stage had hit double figures. Grbesa's header from the corner flew inches over the bar.

The Knights did get their goal in the last minute of normal time, in a crowded box several shots bombarded the home goal with Spiteri and Watson having efforts cleared off the line before Kiratzoglou pounced and slammed the ball home, sending the Knights fans into ecstasy as players joined the supporters in celebrations.

The win keeps the Knights in the top 2, and sets up an interesting fixture next week as they travel to Preston. The A.I.S is back in Canberra to tackle relegation threatened Fawkner.

MATCH STATS:
SHOTS: AIS 5, MK 14
ON TARGET: AIS 3, MK 7
CORNERS: AIS 0, MK 12

A.I.S Line Up: Birghitti (gk), Mullen, Devere, Tibbetts (Miloanovic 83'), Pavlak (Anderson 62'), Cvetanovski, Theodore, Fondyke, Naidovski, Danning, Munro.

Goals: Mullen (11')
Yellow Cards: Naidovski (45'), Fondyke (65') Cvetanovski (87')
Red Cards: Munro (25')

Melbourne Knights Line Up: Ozdemir (gk), Iosifidis (Thompson 90'), Franjic (Zahra 76'), Elvin, Grbesa, Watson, Kiratzoglou, Matkovic, Pelikan, Barisic (Spiteri 64'), Petrevski.

Goals: Franjic (48'), Kiratzoglou (89')
Yellow Cards: Petrevski (15') Franjic (29')

Man of the Match:
Alex Kiratzoglou (MK)

Crowd: 800approx @ Austar Arena

By Andrew Fisher
Photos by Steve Starek

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GREEN GULLY CAVALIERS

4 - 0

PRESTON LIONS

CAVALIERS SHINE IN DOWNPOUR

Gully punishes 10 men Lions

The Green Gully Cavaliers have given the 2007 Foxtel Cup Champions, The Preston Lions a four nil hiding at Green Gully Reserve. With

Andy Vargas running riot early on, the Preston Lions were on the back foot for most of the first half. Preston goalkeeper, Lupce Acevski was called upon by the Preston faithful many times before eventually an Andy Vargas corner kick, nodded on at the near post by Joel Nikolic, was powerfully headed into the Preston goal by Gully's captain Dean Fak.

Shortly after Joel Nikolic thought he had scored with a header of his own, but agonisingly saw his effort crash off the far post. With a strong wind blowing toward the Preston goal, the home team went into the halftime break happy with the one goal lead, but were hoping their other missed chances would not come back to haunt them in the second half.

Whilst the travelling team did improve slightly at the beginning of the second half, on the hour mark, Preston coach Goran Lozanovski would have been fuming as his defense all but threw the game away.

Referee Hakan Anaz ruled a Preston handball inside the area, which Gully's Steven Burton converted on the second attempt, after Acevski saved the first, Les Anastasiou, already on a yellow card, kicked the ball well out of the ground and possibly into the next suburb, earning himself a second yellow card and putting his team down to ten players for the remaining 30 minutes of football.

As the heavens opened and the rain poured, the floodgates opened at Green Gully Reserve. Koce Delev made it three within a minute, and Campbell Banks tapped in a fourth on the eighty minute mark. The Cavaliers went one point clear of the Melbourne Knights at the top of the Foxtel Cup, whilst Green Gully's Under 21's also remained on top, by three points, with a 1-0 win over Preston.

Green Gully:
Steven Tilovski, Kristijan Ivesic, Steven Burton, Dean Fak, Kole Delev, Fleming Jeffrey, Koce Delev, Manny Muscat, Ryan Ollerton, Andy Vargas, Joel Nikolic.

Scorers: Fak 30', Burton 60', Koce Delev 61', Banks 80'.
Yellow cards: Muscat 89'.
Red cards: None

Preston Lions:
L.Acevski, V.Pititto, L.Anastasiou, J.Sapazovski, F.Catalano, N.Schwal, S.Masalkovski, B.Micovski, M.Miskas, B.Georgioski, R.Chillico.

Scorers: None
Yellow cards: Anastasiou 55', Schwal 54', Georgioski 89'.
Red cards: Anastasiou 65'.

Man of the Match :
Kristijan Ivesic
(Green Gully)

Crowd: 1000
Venue: Green Gully Reserve

goal! Weekly

By Markian Jaworsky
Photos by Daniel Flis

Preston's Les Anastasiou sees red for an act of dissent after kicking the ball away.

Green Gully's Koce Delev makes it 2-0 against the reigning champs at Green Gully Reserve on Saturday.
The 4-0 win consolidates the Cavaliers' position at the top of the Foxtel Cup standings.

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PRESTON LIONS

1 - 1

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

WHITE KNIGHT!

Honours shared in a derby classic

Alex Kiratzouglou became the Melbourne Knight's white knight scoring deep into stoppage time to rescue a point for the Melbourne Knights against the Preston Lions in a showdown that will go down in Victorian football folklore as one of the all time classics between the rival clubs.

The last minute winner ensured the Knights preserved their undefeated start to the season and robbed Preston of two points just when the Lions thought that they had done enough to earn an unlikely victory.

Using an old cliché, the Knights threw everything but the kitchen sink at the Lions, with a combination of some desperate defending from an undermanned Lions defence and hint of luck continuing to frustrate the visitors for the afternoon. The Knights should have snatched the lead in the second minute when Zoran Petrevski's cross found Andrew Barisic on the edge of the six yard box, only for Barisic to be denied by the post. Minutes later, it was Ricky Chillico to the Lion's rescue, as goalkeeper Lupce Acevski spoilt a hotly struck cross from Petrevski. Down on the ground after spoiling the ball, Acevski could only watch as the ball began to drift into the back of his own net, but was a relieved man when Chillico managed to clear the danger off the goal line.

One of Preston's first ventures forward for the afternoon ended up reaping the full reward. In the tenth minute, Johnny Sapazovski combined with Chillico on the left corner of the Knight's box. Sapazovski cut the ball on the inside to finish from eighteen yards out with a chip that had enough height to defy Ozdemir and gift the Lions the lead against the run of play.

On the half hour mark, Anthony Pelikan thought he had done enough to level the contest for the Knights, with a superb solo run deep in midfield, bursting his way through the Lions central defence and finally Acevski to finish in front of an open goal. The goal however was quickly cancelled out by referee Perry Muir, deeming the midfielder fouled Acevski in his final passage of play.

The woodwork came to the Knight's rescue minutes later when Bale Micovski's strike on the half volley from twelve yards was cancelled by the crossbar. Rather than having an opportunity to extend their lead, the Lions were grateful the game was not all square again when a corner ball found unmarked Andrew Barisic on the back post. Unfortunately for Barisic, his header sailed across the face of goal.

The Knight's frustrations continued in the second half when captain Craig Elvin was twice denied opportunities to score, the first a towering header from a corner which was saved by Acevski and the second a header which appeared to be goal bound, only for Chillico to clear off line. The Lions somehow managed to retain their clean sheet in the seventieth minute when Ivan Franjic whipped in a cross that found Petrevski centrally ten yards out. Petrevski negotiated his way around Acevski and looked to have found the equaliser but had his low strike blocked by youngster Stephen Masalkovski who continued to add to the Knight's frustrations.

With time ticking down for the Knights, Cameron Watson won a free kick twenty five yards out and the resulting strike looked destined for the top corner of the net, but Acevski managed to save the shot at full stretch. Minutes later, Watson won another free kick in a similar position and this time Pelikan sent the ball into the six yard box finding Petrevski, whose shot on the turn sailed inches wide of the back post.

The Knights were seconds away walking from B.T Connor Reserve experiencing defeat for the first time this season until Joe Spiteri broke free deep on the left hand flank for the Knights. Spiteri's cross picked out Alex Kiratzouglou who finished from six yards, sending the travelling supporters into raptures with a point salvaged for the Knights.

After trailing for the bulk of the afternoon, the Knights had the opportunity to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat when Spiteri latched onto a half volley on the fringe of the box, only to be denied by the woodwork yet again! Lions coach Goran Lozanovski decided to put the boots on for the first time as a Lion and appeared briefly on the pitch before referee Muir drew the match to a close.

Lions coach Goran Lozanovski was unavailable for comment, but his counterpart Chris Taylor walked away with mixed emotions, stating "we have a habit of scoring late and conjuring results over the last couple of weeks. I'm relieved to get a point, but frustrated that we had that many chances and failed to capitalise".

The Knight's unblemished record for the year will be tested again next week when it hosts neighbours Green Gully, whilst the Lions don't have far to travel either – a short trek to C.B Smith Reserve against the Fawkner Blues.

Preston Lions: L. Acevski, M. Ladnjak (C. Toleski 44') V. Pititto, R. Chillico (Y. Saiid 70'), M. Gasparis, J. Sapazovski (G. Lozanovski 90 +2'), M. Miskas, B. Micovski, I. Kolevski, N. Schwal, S. Masalkovski.

Scorers: J. Sapazovski (10')

Yellow cards: Nil
Red cards: Nil

Melbourne Knights: S. Ozdemir, S. Iosifidis (C. Timmons 60'), M. Grbesa, D. Matkovic, C. Watson, A. Pelikan, A. Barisic (J. Spiteri 60'), C. Elvin (c), Z. Petrevski, I. Franjic, A. Kiratzoglou.

Scorers: A. Kiratzoglou (90'+3)

Yellow Cards: Nil
Red Cards: Nil

Man of the Match:
Victor Pititto (Preston Lions)

Crowd: 1500

By Andrew Fisher

Photos by Steve Starek

For the second week in a row Alex Kiratzoglou scores at the death to earn the Knights a dramatic result in the Foxtel Cup.

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OAKLEIGH CANNONS

2 - 1

ALTONA MAGIC

CAGALJ MAGIC FOILS ALTONA

Cannons' keep in touch with pacesetters

Oakleigh Cannons overcame an early set back to overrun a tiring Altona Magic 2-1 at Jack Edwards Reserve on Friday night.

But the Cannons still needed a wonderful second half penalty save by keeper Adrian Cagalj to get them over the line first in a match pitting two evenly matched top six sides, locked together on 18 premiership points.

The Magic, playing their second match in five days, were hoping to extract a measure of revenge for their season ending loss to the Cannons in last year's finals. The hosts in contrast were refreshed after a bye the previous weekend. But it was Altona that jumped out of the starting blocks, launching a successful 2nd minute strike through a Michael Curcija header after Henry Fa'Arodo whipped in a cross from the left flank.

The Magic looked the sharper of the two sides in the opening twenty minutes particularly in midfield, as they pressed forward in search of a second goal to cushion their early lead.

But a turnover of possession in the midfield led to a 32nd minute equalizer for the Cannons when ex-Oakleigh defender Steve Laurie handled the ball. Referee Senko Rastocic had no hesitation pointing to the spot despite the Magic players' strong protests that the foul occurred outside the area. Cannons' striker Tex Apostolikas made no mistake with the spot kick.

The goal seemed to take some of the wind out of the Magic's sail and the Cannon's midfield began to assert itself.

Bill Damianos and Frank Lagana had shots at goal early in the second half, with Lagana finishing off a neat sequence of passing with a shot straight at keeper Bojo Jevdevic. In the 55th minute, Lagana's left foot strike beat Jevdevic at his near post with the help of a deflection from Magic midfielder Todd McSorley.

The Magic missed a great chance to strike back immediately when they won a penalty for a Ramsay Nasser handball in the box. When ace marksman Curcija stepped forward to place the ball on the spot, most spectators would have expected an equalizer but Cannons keeper Cagalj dived low to his left to palm the placed shot around the post much to the delight of his teamates.

The Cannons by now had a full head of steam prompting Magic coach Vlado Tortevski to move Doug Mladenovic out of central defence into his customary midfield position. Mladenovic produced a couple of strikes in the last 10 minutes, but it was the Cannons who came closest to scoring another when Juan Nilo shot narrowly wide of the post.

Cannons coach Stuart Munro praised his team after the match. " They showed a lot of character after going behind early on. The problem we've kind of faced over the last two of three weeks, we've had a game, we've had a week off, so we've kind of broken our rhythm that we had going at the beginning of the season. To scrap through and get the result tonight was very important for us and will hold us in good stead going forward."

Magic coach Tortevski commented after the match, " I always say if you don't score in derby games like we had tonight, you get punished. That's what happened here tonight. After we went one nil up, Curcija had a very good opportunity to make it two. Cagalj made a very good save. That was crucial. If we had've scored the penalty maybe the goal would've driven us all the way to the end. But I think tonight was Oakleigh's night and congratulations to them."

Lineups

Cannons: A. Cagalj, F. Rosman, F.Lagana, S.Webster, S.Drakos, B. Damianos, J.Munoz, A. Drakos, J. Nilo (M. Lijic 72'), T. Apostolikas (S. Kelly 75'), R. Nasser (T. waterson 62')

Scorers: T. Apostolikas (pen 32'), F. Lagana (55')

Altona Magic: B. Jevdevic, C.Anthopoulos, S. Laurie, D. Mladenovic, H. Fa'Arodo, C. Recchia, M. Curcija, P. Siveski (C. Sweeney 81'), A. Sheifovski, T. McSorley, P. Cergovski (S. Kozimovski 70')

Scorer: M. Curcija (2')

Man of the Match: A. Cagalj

By George Stogiannou

Photos by Peter Kakalias

Super Shot Stopper: Adrian Cagalj earns the accolades from his team-mates after pulling off a tremendous penalty save from Altona's Michael Curcija. The win enabled Oakleigh to keep the pace with the front runners in the Foxtel Cup.

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FIVE GOAL KNOX ROCKS TO THE TOP

Chelsea 0
Knox City 5
(Half-time 0-2)

Knox City moved to the top of State League Division Two South East on goal difference with a comprehensive 5-0 victory away at Chelsea on Saturday.

Tony Saunders starred for Knox with a hat-trick as the visitors repelled early Chelsea pressure to dominate all over the park. Buljabasic had his best game since joining Knox and he and Kerr won and distributed the ball time and again.

Kicking with a strong wind, the home side went with three up front and they had most of the early possession, playing long balls into their forwards. However, it only took Knox 10 minutes to get on the scoreboard. A long throw on the left was flicked on and Hingert was able to head over Klarica who was standing six metres out from his goal line.

At the other end, McEvoy made a one-handed stop from Tudor, but by this stage their early territorial advantage ahad subsided and Knox took a two goal lead in the 27th minute when Valadon played a clever ball to the near post and Saunders was on hand to steer the ball past Klarica.

Any chance Chelsea might have had was erased only 2 minutes into the second half. Another long throw from Nick Veljovic was adjudged to have been diverted into his own goal by Rahjer, although Saunders had a claim to have had the last touch.

By now the rain was driving down and conditions were getting difficult for both sides. On 57 minutes, Saunders got his second, being first to a right wing corner to convert with ease.

McEvoy made his best save in the 65th minute with an excellent full length finger tip save as Chelsea strove to get some consolation out of the game. It was not to be and in the 82nd minute, Saunders completed his hat-trick after the best move of the match. Martinez broke up an attack and moved into the Chelsea half on the left flank. He then transferred the ball from one side of the park to the right wing where he found Hingert, who delivered the perfect cross behind the defence leaving Saunders with an easy goal.

Knox City Reserves came out on top in the clash between the two teams with 100% records. A hat-trick to Daniel Veljovic gave Knox a comfortable 3-0 lead before Chelsea made a late, but unavailing charge with two late goals.

Knox City: K. McEvoy, A. Edgar, C. Kerr, P. Veljovic, N. Veljovic, J. Hingert (L. Piertese – 85th), M. Hoogendyk (P. Nedza – 70th), Z. Buljabasic, A. Saunders, J. Valadon (L. Gribic -65th), P. Nedza. Sub not used – M. Jorgensen.

Chelsea: J. Klarica, J. Rahjer, T. Grskovic, S. Topalovic, Z. Tudor, I. Gelemanovic, L. Palinic, J. Briscoe (T. Muretic – 60th), T. Bosnak, I. Bajo, J. McMinimee (M. Cleeland – 42nd): Subs not used: D. Bosnjak, K. Basic.

State League Div 2 SE

By Bruce Darnell

CHAMPS STOP PRESTON STREAK

Heidelberg Utd 2
Preston Lions 0

Heidelberg Utd WFC had to be at their best on Saturday at The Olympic Village to stop the rampaging Preston Lions girls in Round Six of the WPL.

Preston, without Striker Sarah Lovett due to a mystery virus had taken it right up to the Bergers and it was an "off the line" clearance by Chrissy Baxendale from a Paula Massouh volley in the 12th minute that kept the home team in the hunt. The reigning champs, under the guidance of John Lioupas had their chances too and were kept out by some brilliant goalkeeping from Nabby Saliba and solid defence by Roni Guilbert , Casey Naumovski and Kate Christoff.

Heidelberg , with all the possession in the midfield forced to blast shots from long range to no avail. Things were quite tense right up until the 70th minute mark when Super-Sub Melanie Camilleri stepped up and bagged an instinctive strikers goal from close range after another Saliba save.

Preston Coach Andy Fry pushed players forward and perhaps overcommitted to carve out an equalizer but the undermanned Lions defence got caught three on three and Camilleri made no mistake . In the last ten Preston fought hard through a string of passes from Sarah Sumner and Diana Piculovski and hit the post against 10 Women following the Gabbie Angelucci send-off . Brilliant for Heidelberg were as always Bel Pannella & Jam Maza and also young gun Julia Nicolaci and for the away team Saliba in goal , Roni Guilbert Julia Baldwin, Kate Christoff and power forward Peta Lipec worked hard all day .

WPL

By Gordon Bennett

Berger Belinda Pannella produced another outstanding perfomance.

SPRINGVALE FEASTS ON FLAKEY SHARKS

South Springvale 5
Port Melbourne 1

South Springvale striker Mark Panaghis's first half hat trick spearheaded his team to a 5-1 victory over Port Melbourne Sharks at a windswept Warner reserve on Saturday.

The visitors started the game promisingly enough with two good chances to strike first but wayward finishing and a Tony Sango save denied them. Panaghis then struck twice within five minutes to put the home team in control before Sharks' striker Oleksiy Khrapko scored an excellent goal to lift his side. The youthful Sharks, kicking with a strong breeze pressed forward in search of an equalizer but were caught by a swift Springvale counterattack involving midfielder Con Harbis, which led to Panaghis scoring his third goal on the stroke of half time.

The home team took a stranglehold on the match early in the second half with further goals to Chris Andronicou, from a Louie Diniotis cross and to Diniotis himself from a penalty.

Souths coach Pierre Petropoulos commented after the game, " I think our experience made a big difference today. They had their moments. But Mark Panaghis was outstanding. Con Harbis and Louie Diniotis were all influential, so experience was a big factor." The coach isn't getting carried away yet with the third consecutive win. " The draw has been favourable for us. It's not until round seven or eight when we meet a team which I'd say is more or less a contender for the title. Let's say your Doncasters or your Cranbournes, Diamond Valleys. We've got a favourable draw. I think the team is aware we're playing ourselves into form because we did start off a bit slow. Today is a signal to our boys that we can carry on, but we haven't actually hit top form yet. We're positive we can get more results leading to those harder games as well."

Today's result gives South Springvale third place on the ladder behind Knox City and Doncaster Rovers. All three have equal points separated only by goal difference.

State League 2SE

By George Stogiannou

WERRIBEE PICK UP ALL POINTS AGAINST BRUNSWICK

Werribee City 2
Brunswick City 0

Brunswick City trekked out to Werribee in their first away encounter of the season eager to make amends of last week's mishap against Altona City.

A lush green open pitch greeted them upon their arrival at Galvin Park Reserve increasing their appetite for some entertaining football. Their enthusiasm was taken on to the pitch as they started the match on fire. The first minute of the match saw the visitors get on the front foot when Santilli was forced to make a great save after Ismail's shot appeared to be heading goal bound. Five minutes later Santilli was beaten but this time the woodwork prevented Con Vouloumanos's shot from opening the score.

The trend continued with Werribee pressed back into their own half but Brunswick squandered opportunities. In the 23' a good passage of play ended with Stafrace turning and shooting in the 18 yard box but he too was fractionally off target .For the home team some tactical change was required and in the 27' of the game they went on the attack creating their first real chance of the half. Panebianco received the ball on the right and put in a lovely cross to find Matt Collins who had little trouble heading the opening goal of the game. This appeared the catalyst for the 'Bees' as Barbieri's shot a minute later looked like the lead would be doubled only to see Brunswick's custodian, Dimitropoulos, pull off one of numerous fine saves for the afternoon. Brunswick again raised the tempo in search of the equaliser and in the last two minutes of the half again created two good chances through Ismail and Sanita. In fact Sanita's left foot volley in the 45' hit the crossbar on it's way out. From all reports Brunswick's first half was one of the best their supporters have witnessed in over two years but what was worrying was their inability to put the ball into the back of the net and their fickle defence. The second half began with Brunswick appearing to be more patient in their attacks but neither team created any real chance until the 57' when Con Vouloumanos was dispossessed in his back third by goal scorer, Matt Collins. The Werribee striker proceeded to head goal wards creating a one on one with Dimitropoulos but he was thwarted by the Brunswick keeper who was having a brilliant day. Lady luck could only frown on Brunswick as Athanasopoulos's free kick in the 69' also hit the cross bar to deny the 'Wicks' from scoring. As the game wore on and the pressure to get one back for Brunswick increased the gaps of overcommitment appeared to widen in the Brunswick defence. In the 79' Karanicolas of Werribee took advantage of Collin's assist but Dimitropoulos again saved his team from point blank range. The same duo were involved in the goal which 'broke the camel's back' as Collins sealed the win in the 84' as he tapped in a cut back from the touchline. The win sends Werribee to fifth place on the table (7pts) with Brunswick just behind in 6th place (6pts).Ciantar surely has some issues to address during the week one being their inability to score given the numerous chances created and the second being the accountability of his backline which at times appears to lose concentration in crucial stages of the game.

Score: Werribee City 2
Brunswick City 0
Goalscorers: Matt Collins 27' and 84' (Werribee City)

Best: Dimitropoulos, Sanita, Karas, Danos

Line up:Dimitropoulos, Danos, Jackson J.Vouloumanos, Dokolas (55' Gonullu), Athanasopoulos, Karas (80' O'Brien) Ismail, Sanita, Stafrace, C.Vouloumanos

Reserves:
The reserve team could not manage to register their first point of the season and remain win less after four games. The 1-2 loss (Rani) highlights Brunswick's lack of depth.

State League Div 2 NW

By Elias Simopoulos

BOO'S WORLD With Mark Boric

I write this column under the duress of not having internet access due to the poor level of customer service of Telstra, an organisation I have about as much respect for as the Football Federation Victoria.

This means I am not able to access the top quality FFV websites, including the Foxtel Cup site where some match reports are hosted. Including one from the Heidelberg-Richmond game of last week, which due to the technical difficulties I have just mentioned I cannot quote in full.

However, I can recall the reporter mentioned how the Eagles attacking stocks were hampered in the second half by the dismissal of striker Pablo Cardozo. Which would have some merit, had Cardozo not been sent-off in a post-match fracas. Yes, that is after the final whistle. Maybe the FFV should put the timing of red-cards on the details pages of Results Vault so that those making up reports based on that data can do so with a bit more accuracy.

At this point I would like to point out that my match reports for this paper are sometimes compromised by my other duties with my club, Richmond. Those with a keen eye may have noticed that the action seems to slow down in the last ten or fifteen minutes of every first half when I head to the dressing room the prepare the half-time drinks, pour some into cups and replensish the lolly and chewing gum stocks.

I have also missed spells of home games when getting match balls back from the Citilink section of the Monash Freeway. Yet I don't think I have ever made an error as bad as the one above, or an earlier FFV game report this season in which Pablo Cardozo scored after an apparent thirty-yard strike from Joe Spiteri at his own goal hit the crossbar and fell to him.

The Asian Champions League campaign for Melbourne Victory is dead in the water, more a case of euthanasia than Victory in Asia. Some say lessons have been learnt for future campaigns, but given the form showed in the competition, and the poor title defence of 2007-2008, those lessons may be forgotten before they ever get a chance to be used.

The early season crackdown of swearing by players may already be easing up going on what I witnessed on Saturday night. You have to feel sorry for those who got the red cards early on in the piece before the inevitable easing down turns into the typically inconsistent one in ten cases gets pinged.

Back to the bashing of the FFV. Will the State and Provisional Leagues ever get their full match details put up on Results Vault? Do member clubs not pay exhorbitant fees for alleged FFV services? Why isn't Results Vault being used to it's full potential? Is it due to imcompetance, lack of interest, or both?

Timmy Cahill has come home to Sydney for treatment to his injured foot. The best advice I can give him is do not use the same medics as Harry Kewell. Or else he may as well retire now rather than making endless comebacks for just two games a season.

The Grim Reaper puts the Victory out of its misery in the ACL.

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KATSA'S KORNER With George Katsamboukas

KATSA'S KORNER 3-10

What do the Sunshine Georgies, Pascoe Vale, Monbulk, Berwick Kings and Hume United have in common?

All are unbeaten in their respective Leagues with four games played, and Pascoe Vale is yet to concede a goal!

Great starts to the year, but remember the old saying sung out at many of the house auctions that take place each week, "It's not where we start that matters, but where we finish"

Around the grounds we go and as mentioned above, the Sunshine Georgies are off to a flying start in State League One with their latest scalp being that of Langwarrin whose long drive to Chaplin Reserve ended in a very sad end, to the tune of a 3-0 defeat.

Speaking of Chaplin Reserve, Katsa and Co. played the role of personal bodyguard there to Dougie "Oi Oi! Oi!" Brown in 1984, after the match between George Cross and South Melbourne became a touch heated and a few tempers frayed, escorting him to his car after the match.

Dougie was not concerned about his personal safety as much as he was with holding on to his take-qway of a six pack of VB's.

Dougie they were as safe as houses.
If you were however carrying a bottle of J Walker, it may have been a different story…

State League Division 2 South East is as tight as Kevin Rudd's upcoming Budget, with only three points separating first from ninth.

This League would also have to have the record for the most penalties and Red Tickets awarded, with the numbers running way over double figures.

The Foxtel Cup is becoming very interesting in terms of the relegation battle, remember that four teams will drop this year, with the gap between those teams that will be safe and those that won't, growing.

Over to the UK we go, the home of $50 Steaks and where the Aussie Dollar has about as much value as cigarette lighters in the Quit Campaign Office.

The finale to the EPL has certainly become more interesting after Chelsea defeated Manchester United 2-1 on the weekend.

Sir Alex Ferguson's face was as red as the label on a J Walker Bottle after his team went down, and he certainly made his feelings known to the "Men In Black" after the match.

His teeth will also need some attention this week with the chewing of the gum working overtime.

Next Stop Japan, where Ernie's Boys bowed out of the "Happy End" Asia Cup, losing their do or die match against Osaka last week.

Adelaide United however is sitting pretty on top of their group and are a good chance to progress to the next stage.

Enough travelling, the 8 hour stints without a W N Filed are killing me, so…..

Over to the House of Darebin we go, (G'Day Mark), where Australia Post had to provide three extra delivery vans, to cater for the large amount of mail being sent to the FFV last week.

Their Internet Provider also had to increase their Band width with an increased amount of "You've Got Mail" popping up on the various PC's there.

Reason?

The Junior Leagues kicked off on the weekend and it coincided with Orthodox Easter Sunday.

As there are a large number of players who participate at Junior Level who are Orthodox Christians, they and their parents would prefer to be at home with their families to celebrate Easter as opposed to playing soccer, hence the application made by a large number of clubs to the FFV to postpone their matches on their Easter Sunday.

I've written about this many times, why on earth do the FFV not declare Orthodox Easter Weekends as Byes, given that a very large number of their participants are Orthodox Christian?

The FFV have made an exception for one club whose religion prohibit them from playing on Saturdays. Surely if they can change 22 fixtured matches each year, the same could be done for one week of the year, where Orthodox Easter falls?

It makes good sense.
The Transfer window for the Foxtel Cup and State League Division One is opening very shortly and there will be a flurry of activity with clubs wanting to top up their player rosters.

The winners will be the players that have been targeted, they will be hearing the famous "Kaching" sound week in week out.

Until next week.

This is Katsa – Just as you've known him.

And remember, the only bad tasting J Walker, is the one that you didn't drink!

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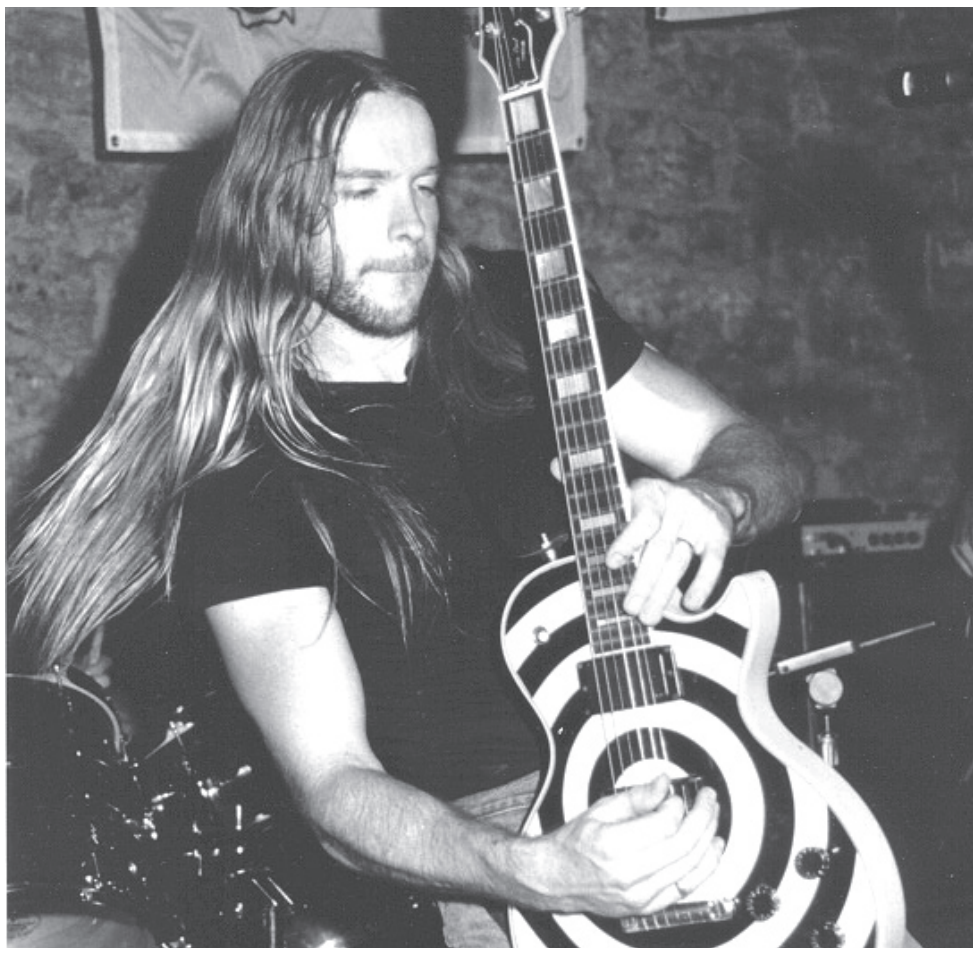
TSIGAN'S TSIGAR

With Mike Lilikakis



VIRUS

Players these days are rewarded far too quickly for what they do, or haven't done. The obvious case is the latter. In the past you had to earn the right to play, based on performance and commitment.
I recall Central Park in fall, how you tore your dress, what a mess, I confess.
Nowadays, its all handed to you on a gold platter, dur cash, dur promise of glory, and dur players are thus getting spoiled.
Hence the virus.
That mentality is viral.
There is no medication for this blight, Malcolm, and its spreading to the juniors licket split.

Soon as a team gets relegated, or is on the brink of said sinking, the rats jump the ship, and salvage what little pride is related to their skill and attitude.
Football is dying in this country, contrary to stats, figures or coverage. If players these days model themselves on the "stars" that travel around for the bucks and titles which are on offer, the standard will never improve, and domestic football will bite quite a few silver bullets.

Players have to contend with contending to being content as a result of lackluster management and poor understanding of club ethics and pride. In case you would hate to recall, Tsigan did a shpritz on Dur Five Year Plan a few weeks ago, and told it very mucho la grandee just like it was, is not, and therefore, and perhaps possibly, thus should be.

Say that thice.

No need to reiterate the Beetle juice, but SO MANY CLUBS could've, should've, would've done SO MUCH BETTER if they stuck to the ethos of true football standards set by wogs long ago, and dictated forth in football etymology.

Why are senior games played on all sorts of nights instead of the traditional Sunday?
For financial gain?

CHORTLE and GUFFAW!

How can a Club make money, if people would rather go to anything else BUT a "soccer game"? Clubs that succeed financially are loaded with sponsors, or backed by gambling revenues. Semantics do not play a role here.
The last role und mit roll of the dice bar Lot, is old school.
Play AT your HOME GROUND when the JUNIORS are playing there also.

FFS

(Finer Fork Services do not endorse, or are hereby affiliated with, nor recognize the validity of the following statement, or reference to FFS, by the Tsigan FC Pty Ltd.)

A minimum of 3 playing grounds not including the seniors/match pitch is a pre-requisite.
2 canteens and a drink/bar stand.
A roster pours qua.

*9am - U10's on pitch 1.
10am - U11's on pitch 1.
11:15am - U12's and U13's on pitch 2 and 3.
12:45pm - U14's and 15's on pitch 2 and 3
2:20pm - U16's on pitch 3
4pm - U18's on pitch 3
5pm - Dur Ressie's on pitch 1
7pm - Dur Senior's on pitch 1

Between the 9am-11:15am time brackets, you're going to have 100-200 people mulling around screaming, eating, drinking, yelling obscenities in flavorsome wog.

12:45pm-4pm expect that to double.

4pm-7pm expect that to treble, nay quadruple.*
(Patented by Tsigan FC Pty Ltd 2008.)

If and when the Senior's are striving for the mark in the Victorian Premier League, and consistently doing well thanks to performance and solid management, especially with no Committee members skimming the cream to fund their personal family end of season trip to Europe, then you're looking to sextuple that estimate and rake in some serious sour dough.

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I know. Its pure gold.
Wile E.Coyote for President.

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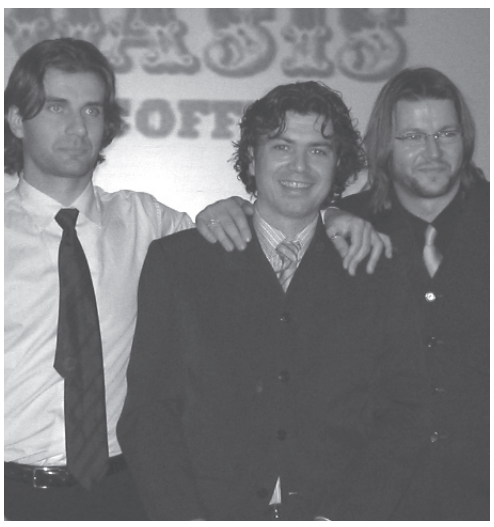
EPITOME

What qualities are to be looked at as a player?
Experience, professionalism, and a true hunger for football.
A positive influence in, around and out of the Club.
Accreditation.
Role Model.

3 out of 4, or 8 ain't bad.

Take Psarros for example.
The bloke didn't play "soccer" till he was

The Wile E Coyote is spot on.



19.
Holds the record for Premier League goals scored in a season at 26. (played 20 games)
Has scored over 100 goals in Serie A.
Suspended for vagrancy and resisting cardiac arrest.

Now at nearly 40, the Ravanelli of Southern Suburbs scores a double over the weekend, to lead the tally yet again. The sly fox in white sox rox, as he spins, turns, feigns the dummy and badabing badabooms the fish nets.

He can still run a hundred in 11 flat, while smoking a mild one at the same time.
The hat trick is around the corner and sooner rather than later, no amount of codeine will stop pistol Pete from making the mother of all comebacks.
6/4 has him on 30 by Round 20

Gun Metal Grey © Boo Enterprises.
A TSIGAN FC Venture.
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SOUP

Short story long, the flies protested about last week's diatribe.
Here is a revised version.

I heard about this restaurant….had reservations, but I went anyway.
I ordered soup…they brought it to me, and it had a fly in it.
I was really depressed.
I had ordered moth.
I wondered if flies got upset because no human actually orders soup with a fly in it.
I wondered if flies got upset when they order soup, and get a human in it.

I know I would.

If I got a fly as a pet, I'd name him "Buzz".
Problem is he'd get depressed living with me.
I'd come home after a shopping spree and find his head in a can of Mortein.

Chicken soup has no chicken in it.
It has stock, but no inventory
The Tsar; Ilyich Stolichnaya is calling.
Spasiba.
Ponyiemayem.
Dosfi danyia.

SPQR
P.S.S.S
NKVD
TSIGAN

VICTORY'S ASIAN DREAM OVER

Defeat in Japan eliminates ACL hopes

Melbourne Victory's Asian Champions League dream is all but over.

After travelling to Japan to face J-League power house Gamba Osaka on match day 4 with their ACL hopes hanging by a thread, Victory needed nothing less than three points.

But Gamba severed the thin thread that had been keeping Victory's hopes alive, with a 2-0 win in Osaka's Expo '70 Stadium, effectively signalling the end of Melbourne's debut season in Asia.

A double from Gamba striker Masato Yamazaki was enough to inflict a painful defeat on Victory, and condemn the A-League side to bottom place of the Group G table.

Victory are currently languishing seven points behind group leader Osaka, making it mathematically impossible for the side to progress to the quarter-finals.

Ernie Merrick made one change to Victory's starting line-up for the trip to Japan, replacing defender Steven Pace with midfielder Kaz Patafta, and subsequently employing a more attacking 3-5-2 formation.

Gamba's vocal home support created a hostile and intimidating atmosphere for the travelling side, and it was the Japanese club who dominated the opening proceedings.

And the home side were rewarded for their dominance in the 31st minute when a well-worked goal, which featured a series of clinical passes by the Japanese side, was rounded off by a simple tap-in by Yamazaki.

Victory's forward Blagoja Celeski had a chance to level the match only minutes later, but his left-footed long-range effort sailed over the goal. Danny Allsopp went even closer to an equaliser in the 42nd minute, when he fired past Osaka 'keeper Naoki Matsuyo, only to see his effort graze the top of the cross-bar.

Victory continued to create openings in the second half, with substitute Tomislav Pondeljak and defender Matthew Kemp close to finding an elusive equaliser.

But Gamba were a persistent threat at the other end, and striker Yamazaki again poked home to make the score 2-0 on 57 minutes, after a dangerous free-kick from Japanese international Yasuhito Endo was poorly dealt with by the Victory back-line.

With the score at 2-0, and Gamba firmly in control, it was proving to be and impossible task for Victory, as Gamba continued to press for a third goal.

At the final whistle came the realisation for Victory that their qualification dreams were now truly over.

Gamba's passing and possession play had been far superior to Melbourne's throughout the match and the rainy conditions had compiled further misery on the Victory.

Coach Ernie Merrick conceded that they had been second best to a more experienced Osaka side, who were fielding several Japanese internationals, and that his side had severely missed the likes of injured duo Archie Thompson and Carlos Hernandez up front.

With only two matches remaining, Victory will be only playing for pride in their final group fixtures.

It has been a disappointing campaign for Merrick's side, with his team claiming only one victory in the group stage, a 2-0 win in the first round against Korea's Chunnam Dragons.

After such a promising start, Victory's campaign has dramatically slid downhill, with the A-League club suffering three consecutive losses and conceding nine goals against their Asian opponents, since their opening win.

Victory will look back to the match against Osaka at the Telstra Dome in match day three as the turning point of their group stage drive, when they twice surrendered the lead to the Japanese club to eventually lose 4-3 in what was billed as a crucial clash.

Had they held on at home, Victory may have faced a completely different prospect heading into its final group matches.

Victory's next match will be an away fixture against Chunnam Dragons in Gwangyang Stadium in Korea on May 7th, and the Melbourne club will be looking to bounce back to finish in a more respectable position on the Group G table.

By Julius Ross

Photos by Daniel Flis

Melbourne Victory were unable to match the sheer depth and experience outfits like Japan's Gambas Osaka offered in the ACL. A sprinkle of quality Brazilian imports also tipped the scales in favour of our Asian counterparts.

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2008

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
KURUVCHI FC (UZBEKISTAN)	4	3	0	1	5	1	4	9
AL ITTIHAD FC (SAUDI ARABIA)	4	2	0	2	3	3	0	6
SEPAHAN (IR IRAN)	4	2	0	2	3	5	-2	6
AL ITTIHAD (SYR)	4	1	0	3	2	4	-2	3

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
SAIPA (IR IRAN)	4	2	2	0	5	2	3	8
AL QUWA AL JAWIYA (IRQ)	4	1	2	1	2	2	0	5
KUWAIT SC (KUWAIT)	4	1	2	1	3	3	0	5
AL WASL SPORTS CLUB (UAE)	4	1	0	3	2	5	-3	3

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
AL KARAMA (SYR)	4	3	1	0	8	2	6	10
AL WAHDA (UAE)	4	1	2	1	5	7	-2	5
AL SADD SPORT CLUB (QATAR)	4	1	1	2	4	6	-2	4
AL AHLI (SAUDI ARABIA)	4	0	2	2	3	5	-2	2

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
AL QADSIA (KUWAIT)	4	3	1	0	4	1	3	10
PAKHTAKOR (UZBEKISTAN)	4	2	1	1	9	4	5	7
AL GHARAFA (QAT)	4	0	2	2	3	5	-2	2
ARBIL (IRAQ)	4	0	2	2	3	9	-6	2

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
ADELAIDE UNITED FC (AUST)	4	3	1	0	8	2	6	10
CHANGCHUN YATAI FC (CHINA)	4	2	2	0	5	3	2	8
POHANG STEELERS(KOR)	4	1	1	2	6	6	0	4
BINH DUONG FC (VIETNAM)	4	0	0	4	4	12	-8	0

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
KASHIMA ANTLERS FC (JAPAN)	4	3	0	1	16	2	14	9
BEIJING GUOAN FC (CHINA PR)	4	3	0	1	8	4	4	9
KRUNG THAI BANK (THAILAND)	4	1	1	2	14	16	-2	4
NAM DINH FC (VIETNAM)	4	0	1	3	4	20	-16	1

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	+/-	Pts
GAMBA OSAKA (Japan)	4	3	1	0	11	7	4	10
CHONBURI FC(THAILAND)	4	1	2	1	6	5	1	5
CHUNNAM DRAGONS (KOREA)	4	1	1	2	6	8	-2	4
MELBOURNE VICTORY FC (AUST)	4	1	0	3	6	9	-3	3

NEXT ROUND - Wed 7th May

BINH DUONG FC (VIETNAM)
v
CHANGCHUN YATAI FC (CHINA PR)

ADELAIDE UNITED FC (AUSTRALIA)
v
POHANG STEELERS(KOR)

CHUNNAM DRAGONS (KOREA REP.)
v
MELBOURNE VICTORY FC (AUSTRALIA)

CHONBURI FOOTBALL CLUB (THAILAND)
v
GAMBA OSAKA (Japan)

DEFENCE DOMINATES EURO SHOW

Riise gifts Chelsea chance, Ronaldo fluffs penalty

A dramatic end at Anfield and a subdued display at the Nou Camp saw defensive superiority prevail in the first legs of the European Champions League semi-finals last week.

An incredible 94th minute own-goal by Liverpool substitute John Arne-Riise and a poorly taken penalty by Manchester United's Portuguese winger Christiano Ronaldo were the major incidents in the two highly anticipated clashes.

Only two goals were scored in the encounters, with the all-English showdown between Liverpool and Chelsea finishing in a 1-1 stalemate and the Barcelona – Manchester United clash ending in a disappointing 0-0.

The two results leave the ties tightly poised for the second legs; however, both United's Old Trafford and Chelsea's Stamford Bridge usually prove difficult stadiums for away teams to secure a positive outcome, consequentially seeing United and the Blues as slight favourites to progress to the final.

Although England boasts three out of four representatives in the semi-finals, the British sides approached the games with extreme caution.

Manchester Untied soaked up considerable Barcelona pressure by having up to 10 men behind the ball for most of their clash in the Nou Camp.

Some may argue that Manchester United's cautious and defensive display was a smart tactic, as they now hold a slim advantage going into the tie at Old Trafford, but it effectively ruined a potentially magnificent football match.

The game in Spain would have taken on a completely different appearance, however, if United's in-form winger Ronaldo had not failed to score from the penalty spot in the third minute.

Ronaldo uncharacteristically fired his spot-kick high and wide, after Swiss referee Massimo Busacca had correctly awarded United a penalty when Barca defender Gabriel Milito had handled inside the area.

It was United's only clear chance of the game, and they struggled to impose themselves on the match, managing an inadequate one shot on target as they sat back and absorbed Barca's numerous attacks.

Barcelona, on the other hand, dominated proceedings, accumulating 20 shots and controlling 73% of the game's possession.

Argentine starlet Lionel Messi was an inspiration for the home side; his close control, penetrating runs and creativity exciting the 98,000 strong crowd.

The only failure in Barcelona's performance was not finishing their numerous chances, and Manchester must be applauded to some extent for their defensive composure in keeping a clean sheet.

After absorbing excessive pressure at the Nou Camp, United will be favourites heading into the second leg, but cannot write off Barcelona; the Catalan club will only need a score-draw to progress, whilst United will need to win outright to advance.

Sir Alex Ferguson replied to criticism in the media and has vowed to attack Barcelona on home soil, which will make for a very attractive second leg.

Like United, Chelsea will carry a slim advantage heading into their second leg against fierce Champions League rivals Liverpool.

There had been much pre-match criticism of this particular semi-final, with many critics posing that the ties between Liverpool and Chelsea are regularly goalless bore-fests.

In the previous six Champions League encounters between the sides there had only been three goals scored, with the ties typically being decided by small details in passionate and tense encounters, and this match was no different.

Both sides were wary of the importance of the tie, and sat back and defended conservatively, resulting in a cagy affair with numerous mistakes and turnovers of possession in the midfield.

Although the clash at Anfield was a rather scrappy and cautious affair, no-one could argue that the atmosphere was dour.

The Liverpool faithful were in full voice, and belted out a spine tingling, six minute rendition of their famous chant You'll Never Walk Alone, which drowned out both the small grouping of Chelsea supporters as well as the Champions League anthem, prior to kick-off.

Buoyed by their boisterous home-support, Liverpool started the better of the two teams and created the early chances through a long-range effort from Steven Gerrard and Dirk Kuyt.

The home side was rewarded two minutes before half-time after a rather scrappy goal by Kuyt sent the Anfield crowd wild.

Liverpool continued as the more dominant side in the second half and did enough to potentially make the scoreline 3-0, but for Petr Cech's heroics in the Chelsea goal.

Cech made a string of fantastic saves from the likes of Fernando Torres and Gerrard to thwart the Reds and keep the sides level.

Liverpool dictated most of the play, and created almost double Chelsea's scoring opportunities, with the Blue's stars Frank Lampard playing well below his potential and striker Didier Drogba supremely outclassed by a defiant Jamie Carragher.

In the closing stages Liverpool looked to have placed one foot in the final, but Anfield is famous for its dramatic finishes in Europe, and as the final whistle came ever closer, a seemingly harmless 94th minute cross by Solomon Kalou was deflected in the Kop net via defender John Arne-Riise's head.

Liverpool were stunned, Chelsea ecstatic.

It had changed the complexion of the two-legged tie completely, leaving Chelsea suddenly favourites with a priceless away goal and Liverpool, despite their dominance, underdogs.

Liverpool is yet to score under Rafa Benitez at Stamford Bridge, but when a passionate Steven Gerrard was quizzed by a reporter post-match about the prospect of scoring at the Bridge, he replied, "We haven't played there with Fernando Torres, have we?"

The Reds have also scored away at the Emirates Stadium against Arsenal and at the San Siro against Inter Milan in the knock-out stages, which will give them confidence to score in the second leg.

The semi-finals, although both lacking the high quality displays of footballing ability that many fans and pundits were hoping for, still managed to highlight the unpredictability of the Champions League, which makes it such an entertaining competition.

By Julius Ross
Champions League Reporter

The pressure takes its toll: Manchester United's Christiano Ronaldo and Liverpool's John Arno-Riise will be looking to redeem themselves in the return legs of the ECL Semi -Finals this week.

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WARREN FOUNDATION IN SAFE HANDS

Chairman Hastings keeps the dream alive

Some people are lifelong followers of football but never entertain the thought of occupying an official position.

Brian Hastings, the newly appointed Johnny Warren Foundation chairman, was one of these supporters until the winter of 1986 when he decided to accept the position of president at Figtree Junior F.C. in the Illawarra Association.

It seemed like small pickings at the time for the former St. George Bank senior executive but it provided the impetus for him to utilise his business skills at a higher level in the game.

From 1991-1998, Hastings was chairman of the Wollongong Wolves when they enjoyed prosperous times in the N.S.L..

Due to business pressures he stepped out of the limelight to enjoy the game from a distance.

However, while he was absent in an official capacity , there was always the prospect of a return to the game and after recent discussions with former CEO, Stefan Kamasz and board member , Les Murray, he gratefully accepted the vacant chairman's position .

In this interview with Roger Sleeman, Brian Hastings discusses his background in football, his involvement in the N.S.L., his thoughts about the direction of the game and his plans for the Johnny Warren Football Foundation.

You've been been sitting on the sidelines for the last few years. What prompted your return to football?

Although I wasn't holding office in the game, I'd been overseas a number of times to watch international football, including the 2005 and 2007 European Champion's League Finals and the 2006 World Cup so my enthusiasm for the game never waned.

Also, I regularly travel from Wollongong to watch Sydney FC and take a great interest in youth football in the Illawarra area.

For some years, I communicated with Johnny Warren and we agreed there was a strong need to provide the resources to produce better technical players.

It's all about opportunity and when the vacancy became available, I believed I could make a contribution in directing the Foundation's strategy to assist the development of young players.

How much can your experience at Wollongong assist you in the new role?

We achieved a lot while I was involved at the Wolves and Brandon Park was always full for our home games.

When Nick Theodorakopolous was coaching we had seven locally produced players in the first team which was a big fillip for the supporters and a great source of encouragement for the aspiring local players who hero worshipped players like Matt Horsley and Scott Chipperfield .

Apart from my duties at the Wolves, I also became involved at the A.S.F. when David Hill was chairman and served on the Finance Committee ,while being heavily involved with the Player's Union in the negotiation of players'contracts.

Let's say I've been through the mill many times in football which can only assist me in facing the challenges of this position.

David Hill had great plans for Australian football, but in the end why didn't he triumph? Do you promote a similar philosophy?

David Hill attempted radical changes which were considered a natural evolution in the game, including the de-ethnicisation of clubs and a greater accountability for finances.

However, the political forces in the game were too strong for him to achieve his aims, even though many of his ideas were similar to those implemented under the current regime.

At the football summit in 1995, it was in fact ASF board member, George Negus, who raised the idea of an A-League.

I definitely supported many of Hill's initiatives, particularly with encouraging business people to contribute expertise in the running of the game.

In fact when I vacated the Wollongong job, a cooperative of business people leased out the Wollongong Wolves name and if Wollongong enters the A-League in the near future it will be a business consortium which will be the major stakeholder.

Where do you see the Foundation positioning itself in the football community in relation to player development?

Obviously, my intention is to elevate the status of the Foundation in the community while not creating the impression we are competing against the academies and other coaching organisations.

We need to adopt a co-operative approach to work with other coaching systems and to prepare young players adequately for NSWIS.

The top European clubs will be depending on their big name players to shine during the semi finals this week. Liverpools Fernando Torres (above), Barcelona's Ronaldinho, Chelsea's Didier Drogba and Manchester Utd's Cristiano Ronaldo will paramount.

As highlighted previously, the Foundation also has to go national in the next few years so it can truly be recognised as an important player in youth development.

Recently there have been some new arrivals on the Board. How significant are these appointments?

We are looking at people who have vast experience at a senior level in major organisations and are primed to contribute their expertise so the Foundation can rise to a new level.

During the next few weeks we are having meetings to modify the strategic plan of the organisation which will have major impact on future directions.

The new directors include Darryl Clout, the General Manager of NSW Sport and Recreation, who has many years experience at the highest level in designing sporting policy.

Steve Warren, a senior executive of AIG and a man with incredible marketing credentials is a welcome addition.

Manuel Xipolitas, a regional executive manager for NAB, has been involved in the game for many years at the grass roots level.

Carlo LoGuidce is a senior commercial manager in the Westfield Group who has also been involved in the game for many years.

Critically, this group of people bring a talent pool together which would be difficult to assemble in any boardroom.

Are you going to involve the former professional players more in the Foundation?

There is no question the expertise of former players should be utilised more in the game and with the formation of a technical committee engineered by Les Murray and the new vice- chairman Jamie Warren, there is every intention to call on their expertise to raise the standard of our development process.

We will also be conducting a summit meeting in the near future to allow the players to provide input as to where we can maximise the potential of our programmes and become an integral part of football culture. After all Johnny Warren spent his entire life trying to achieve greater recognition for his fellow professionals.

We also would like to encourage Socceroos like Harry Kewell and Tim Cahill to identify with the Foundation and ultimately to become patrons.

The Johnny Warren Football Foundation

- Creates a pathway to elite football so that young players have the opportunity to have their talent and skills recognised and developed.
- Has dedicated programs and top level coaches will help keep the "best and brightest" in the game.
- Will open up avenues for the further development of women's and girls' football.
- Provides the opportunity to bring the best coaching and technical expertise to NSW.
- Will raise the bar for football by providing an integrated athlete pathway from club to elite level.
- Provides a substantial lift to the game through harnessing the vision of Johnny Warren in developing the Australian style of football.
- In seeking to achieve its aims, the Foundation will seek the financial support of corporations and individuals.

By Roger Sleeman

Photo provided by Roger Sleeman

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MANLY MOVE AHEAD AS RIVALS SLIP

Robbie Cattanach thumped in a 90th-minute free kick to give Manly United a 2-1 victory over Sydney Olympic, and a three-point buffer at the top of the NSW Premier League.

Second-placed Sutherland were held at home for the second successive week, failing to score against the faltering Marconi Stallions despite dominating the game. Once again, too, Sutherland had a player sent off for dissent.

In the Friday game, the West Sydney Berries added to Bankstown's woes, beating the Macedonian-backed club 2-1 at Jensen Park. Bankstown, one of the pre-tournament favourites, have had their poorest start in many years.

At the Gabbie, Blacktown drew 1-1 with their high-flying visitors Wollongong FC. APIA-Leichhardt, meanwhile, moved into the top six with a 3-0 win in Campbelltown over the Macarthur Rams.

Sydney United 2
Penrith-Nepean United 2

Despite being reduced to ten men late in the second half, Penrith managed to snatch a last-minute equalizer in an entertaining game at King Tomislav Oval.

The game was only five minutes old when Sydney United's Damon Collina strolled up from the back to head in a Petar Markovic corner; the goal, however, was mysteriously disallowed.

The home side used the wide areas to great effect in the early stages, with Markovic and Christopher Boyle getting in a number of useful crosses. However, they created no other clear chances until the 16th minute, when Luka Glavas found space for himself on the edge of the Penrith area but sliced his shot over the top. At the other end, a fine move involving half the Penrith side reached Nathan Ralph on the left, and his crisp diagonal shot was well saved by Vedran Janjetovic.

Sydney United continued to dominate. Joe Vrkic headed over the bar from another Markovic set-piece, and on 24 minutes the Penrith defence was finally breached. Collina, overlapping on the right, received the ball in acres of space; he centred, Ben Vidaic dummied cleverly, and an unmarked Ivo Bosnar had time to take a touch before thumping the ball past Daniel Schwarzer.

Penrith, largely dormant up to that point, suddenly sprang into life. A well-conceived right-wing move ended with a brisk one-two between Javier Mancino and Ralph in the United area; the former was tripped, and the referee had no hesitation in awarding the visitors a penalty. Eric Anabalon duly thumped it into the top right-hand corner of the goal.

The game opened up, and just as Penrith appeared to be assuming the initiative, United scored a very fine goal. Boyle, combining beautifully with Joe Moric on the left, found space for a deep, accurate cross, which was headed in powerfully at the far post by Vidaic.

There was further goalmouth action before the break; Ante Juric, playing against his old club, came up from the Penrith backline to send a fizzing right-footed shot at goal, which was well held by Janjetovic. Boyle and Mancino both had half-chances in the 41st minute, and the first period ended with a Jimmy Nikas free kick being deflected just wide of the United post.

Sydney United continued to dominate the flanks after the interval, but all too often the resulting crosses and cut-backs were not exploited. Indeed, it was Penrith who had the first real chance of the half, Anabalon bursting through on the break only to have his shot smothered by an alert Janjetovic.

Just after the hour, Vidaic finally connected with one of Petar Markovic's excellent crosses, but could not keep his header below the crossbar. Moric too sent a header over the top from a corner, after another shot from Vidaic had been blocked.

On 75 minutes it looked like Penrith had blown it, when Michael Cromer, their left-back, was sent off for a second bookable offence. In truth, he had been lucky to stay on the field after his first, a cynical trip on Luka Glavas as the latter was racing for goal.

Yet Penrith continued to press forward in great numbers, and United failed to make the most of their chances on the breakaway. Schwarzer saved superbly from Vidaic on 80 minutes after Boyle had gotten free on the left, and two minutes later a header from United substitute Elsid Barkhousir almost crept in at the far post: Schwarzer was quick to react.

Markovic was rampant on the United right, and he provided a perfect cut-back for Vidaic on 87 minutes, only for Schwarzer to deny the former Sydney FC man again.

The game was into injury time when Penrith were rewarded for their bold second-half play. Anabalon won a free kick on the edge of the United area, which he took himself; a diving header was cleared off the line, but in the ensuing melee Ryan O'Shea managed to prod the ball past Janjetovic for Penrith's second.

United surged into attack, and there was time for another corner and an astonishing double save by Schwarzer from Moric at the far post. Then time: 2-2, and although the home crowd went away frustrated, the neutrals had gotten their money's worth.

FOOTBALL NSW

TELECHOICE RESULTS

Sydney Olympic 1 (Peter Zorbas 55m) Manly United FC 2 (Robert Cattanach 45/85m), Macarthur Rams 0 APIA Leichhardt Tigers 3 (R Younis 1/12/69m), West Sydney Berries 2 (Nicolo Sama 43m Dimitrios Zakilas 67m) Bankstown City FC 0, Blacktown City Demons 1 (Adam Biddle 46m) Wollongong FC 1 (Ilija Prenzoski 28m pen), Sutherland Sharks 0 Marconi Stallions 0, Sydney United 2 (Ivan Bosner 21m Benjamin Vidiac 33m) Penrith Nepean United 2 (Erick Anabalon 28/90m).

TELECHOICE STANDINGS

		P	W	D	L	F	A	D	Pts
1	Manly United FC	9	7	1	1	25	8	17	22
2	Sutherland Sharks	9	5	4	0	15	5	10	19
3	Wollongong FC	9	5	2	2	12	9	3	17
4	Sydney United	9	4	3	2	14	9	5	15
5	Penrith Nepean United	9	3	4	2	12	11	1	13
6	A.P.I.A Leichhardt Tigers	9	3	3	3	14	14	0	12
7	Sydney Olympic	8	3	2	3	12	8	4	11
8	West Sydney Berries	9	3	2	4	13	13	0	11
9	Blacktown City	9	1	4	4	7	16	-9	7
10	Bankstown City	8	1	3	4	3	13	-10	6
11	Macarthur Rams	9	0	4	5	3	13	-10	4
12	Marconi Stallions	9	0	4	5	5	16	-11	4

By Mike Salter

in Sydney

CROSSWELL REIGNITES ZEBRAS

South Hobart, Olympic open gap at the top

South Hobart and Hobart Olympic remained neck-and-neck on 12 points at the top of the southern Tasmanian Premier League ladder and opened up a 5-point lead over third-placed and reigning champions Tilford Zebras on the weekend.

South Hobart, who lead Olympic on goal-difference, downed eighth-placed New Town Eagles 4-0 away at Clare Street on Saturday, while Olympic beat ninth-ranked Kingborough Lions United 4-1 at home at the Athletic Centre on the same afternoon.

Zebras reignited their defence of the title, out-gunning sixth-placed visitors Clarence United 7-2 at KGV Park on Friday evening and moving up a place to third.

Zebras have now scored 19 goals in their past two outings to record a marvellous goal-difference of +16, which will stand them in good stead at the business end of the season.

Referee Mark Phillips lasted a mere four minutes before a recurring knee injury forced him to make way for his assistant, Kim Barker.

Clarence led Zebras 2-0 after 17 minutes as Dwayne Walsh, who was set to sign for Heidelberg last season, made the most of great passes from Jacob Kavanagh and Matt Lewis to score twice.

With key midfielder Paul Bremner put out of the match in the 23rd minute with torn ankle ligaments following a late tackle by Andrew Telega, Ricky Self pulled a goal back for the Zebras and Ben Crosswell then also netted to make it 2-2 at the break.

Crosswell, son of former VFL great Brent Crosswell, then went on a goal-scoring rampage, adding four more goals in the second half, while Dylan Fennell's strike made it 7-2 for the Zebras.

The 5-goal haul by Crosswell followed his 4-goal feat in the previous outing, a 12-0 thrashing of Taroona. This makes him the league's leading marksman with 11 goals from four games.

Clarence youngster Chris Nicholson was fortunate to stay on the park after a

Ben Crosswell...hit five goals against Clarence United

horrific tackle on David Cox, but Mr Barker merely showed him the yellow card.

New Town Eagles were no match for South Hobart, conceding three goals in the opening half, another just after the interval, and then having striker Chris Stingle sent off near the end after collecting a second yellow card.

South Hobart also struck the Eagles woodwork three times in the second period.

Billy Gasparinatos netted twice, while David Cooper and Jonathon Ladic, the latter from a free-kick, once each.

Diminutive striker Michael Bulis, the league's leading scorer last season, hit a hat-trick for Olympic against Kingborough Lions, while Ben Backhaus netted the remaining goal.

Bulis was elusive, sharp and finished lethally against a much bigger and robust Kingborough defence.

The visitors scored through Greg Freeman to make it 2-1, but poor finishing and good goalkeeping by Olympic's Dmitri Nester saw their challenge peter out.

In the northern Tasmanian Premier League, Devonport City became the new leaders on goal-difference after beating sixth-placed Somerset 2-1 at home at Valley Road.

Northern Rangers moved up a place to second and dumped previous leader Prospect Knights down to third on goal-difference by winning their clash 3-0.

The upset of the round was bottom-side Launceston United's 4-1 away win over Ulverstone at the Showgrounds on the North-West Coast.

Burnie United ensured that four

Michael Bulis...Hat-trick for Olympic

teams are level at the top on 9 points by overcoming Riverside Olympic 4-2 at home at Montello.

FOOTBALL FEDERATION TASMANIA

By Walter Pless

Photos by Walter Pless

TARTAN TALK with Nic Townsend

FERGUSON STOKES UNITED'S INJUSTICE

Sir Alex Ferguson is convinced Manchester United's sense of injustice at their 2-1 defeat against Chelsea will help carry them to the Premier League title.

United face a nerve-jangling finale to the title race after Michael Ballack's late penalty at Stamford Bridge moved Chelsea level on points with the champions.

Ferguson's team can still retain the crown if they win their last two matches against West Ham and Wigan, but United departed west London in a storm of acrimony that stemmed entirely from their anger at letting Chelsea off the hook.

Michael Ballack's brace against EPL leaders Manchester United on Saturday has meant the race for the title will go down to the wire.

When Wayne Rooney punished Ricardo Carvalho's error in the 57th minute to cancel out Ballack's 45th minute header, United had one hand on the trophy.

Then Michael Carrick handled Michael Essien's cross with four minutes left and Ballack stroked home the winner from the spot. Although United's superior goal difference still makes them title favourites, they now have to win it the hard way.

Their frustration boiled over after the final whistle. Patrice Evra, Gary Neville, Paul Scholes, John O'Shea and Gerard Pique were involved in an altercation with stewards and ground-staff after they refused to leave the pitch when asked to stop their post-match warm-down, while Rio Ferdinand had to apologise after accidently kicking a female steward as he lashed out in anger at the result.

While his players were losing their cool, Ferguson was hardly any more philosophical. The Scot claimed Alan Wiley's assistant was wrong to flag for a penalty for Carrick's clear handball and insisted it was a decision that could wreck United's season.

Despite his own rage, Ferguson will now try to channel United's frustration to get a positive reaction in Tuesday's Champions League semi-final second leg against Barcelona and the two remaining league matches.

"It's still in our hands. The players and the support are really fired up for the next game. Hopefully we can get the result we want," he told MUTV.

"In fairness, Chelsea were the better team in the first half. Sometimes, coming out of a European game, it takes a while to get it right. Unfortunately, it didn't happen for us.

"But if we're not getting the decisions we deserve then we're going to have to perform really well.

"The penalty was absolutely diabolical. It is a major decision. Granted, it hit his hand. But he has not lifted his hand above his shoulders, above his head, anything like that.

"It is going straight to Rio Ferdinand. The referee should have seen that rather than the linesman. If we're not going to get those decisions then we are under pressure."

As if the defeat wasn't bad enough, Ferguson will also have to wait anxiously for fitness bulletins about Wayne Rooney and Nemanja Vidic.

Rooney was replaced after taking a bang on the hip while scoring, while Vidic had to be stretchered off following a clash with Didier Drogba that knocked a tooth into his lip.

United are stumbling towards the finish line after winning just one of their last four league games, but Chelsea are unbeaten in 19 matches and deserved their victory against a cautious, subdued United.

Their fate is still in United's hands, but Grant is confident they can go onto win the title.

"I am optimistic but we need to win our last two games and hope Manchester lose one point," he said. "If you come to this stage and you are not optimistic you should not be in sport.

"My players were very competitive. They wanted to win. When you concede a goal like we did it is a little bit disappointing but we were full of energy.

"They wanted to win the game and football is a game of emotion. We competed against Arsenal and against United."

Chelsea's last two matches are at Newcastle and at home to Bolton, but before that they face Liverpool in Europe.

Grant fears they will be without Frank Lampard again as the England midfielder mourns his mother's death on Thursday.

"Football is exciting but there are things that are more important," he said. "I say to the players that on the way to excellency you need to be human, so I think we need to respect what has happened to him.

"We will leave the decision about Wednesday to him. I will respect any decision he makes."

With or without Lampard, Chelsea have ensured the title race will go down to the wire.

	P	GD	PTS
1 Man Utd	36	53	81
2 Chelsea	36	37	81
3 Arsenal	35	37	74
4 Liverpool	36	36	70
5 Everton	35	21	61
6 Aston Villa	35	22	58
7 Portsmouth	35	12	57
8 Man City	36	0	55
9 Blackburn	35	2	52
10 West Ham	36	-5	48
11 Tottenham	36	6	43
12 Newcastle	36	-16	43
13 Sunderland	36	-20	39
14 Wigan	36	-17	37
15 M'borough	36	-19	36
16 Bolton	36	-20	33
17 Reading	36	-28	33
18 Birmingham	36	-17	32
19 Fulham	36	-25	30
20 Derby	35	-59	11

Gossip and Transfer Speculation from the English Media...

Fings: We can Win Euro

Germany midfielder Torsten Frings insists his side are capable of winning Euro 2008 in June to be crowned European champions for the fourth time.

"We have what it is takes to be champions," said Frings on the German Football League (DFL) website after Germany won the European Championships in 1972, 1980 and 1996.

"But we belong to a group of favorites which includes France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands."

Frings has missed most of the season after suffering three knee injuries and has only played eight matches for Werder Bremen this season.

His last appearance for the Germany team was in October 2007, but national coach Joachim Loew is set to name him on May 16 when he unveils his 23-man squad for Euro 2008.

"Torsten is a player who can raise his game over five, six or seven matches, he is the sort of player you want in a tournament," said Loew.

Germany will play Poland, Croatia and co-hosts Austria in group B of Euro 2008.

Cantona Voted Best

Former Manchester United player Eric Cantona has been voted best foreign ever in the Premiership, by readers of Four Four Two magazine.

Cantona finished ahead of two Arsenal players, Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp and another Frenchman, Thierry Henry.

The French are well represented, with no less than twelve players in the top 100. The Dutch follow with ten players.

Cantona, who began his career in France in 1983, joined Leeds United nine years later. After a short while, the forward moved to Manchester United where he would stay until the end of his career in 1997.

Man City Head To Asia

Manchester City will play in Bangkok next month, as the club strengthened its ties with Thailand by appointing a former Thai coach to help develop academies in Asia.

The club announced it will take on a Thailand Premier League all star team on May 17, the Bangkok Post said.

Citing City spokesman Paul Tyrell, it said they will bring all their players not on international duty at the European Championships, including Benjani Mwaruwari, Elano, Martin Petrov, and Darius Vassell.

The squad will also feature the three Thais on City's books -- Suree Sukha, Teerasil Dangda and Kiatprawut Saiwaew.

The club is owned by ousted Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and on Thursday he appointed former Thai national coach Roberto Carlos de Carvalho as an advisor to help develop the club's international academies.

City also play in Hong Kong on May 22 in a previously announced stop.

Cardiff Given Green Light

Cardiff City will be allowed to enter the UEFA Cup if they win next month's FA Cup final.

The Welsh club, who play in the English Championship, were orginally told Football Association regulations would make them ineligible to represent England in Europe if they beat Portsmouth at Wembley, because, as a Welsh side, they would normally have to qualify via the Welsh Cup.

But UEFA had insisted they backed Cardiff's case and the FA board agreed on Thursday to change that ruling, giving Dave Jones's side the chance to dream of a continental campaign next season.

An FA statement said: "The Board has given full approval for Cardiff City to participate in next season's UEFA Cup as one of England's representatives, should they win this season's FA Cup.

"It was decided that the Welsh national anthem would also be played ahead of the game."

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